THE SABER-TUSK WALRUS OF THE ICY SEAS

by ELLIOTT WHITNEY

Franklin Miltenberger

The Saber-Tusk Walrus

OF THE ICY SEAS

By

ELLIOTT WHITNEY

Big Game Series

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THE SABER-TUSK WALRUS

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The Saber-Tusk Walrus

CHAPTER I

A MAD THRUST

To say that Byron Snowder was surprised at the thing he saw would have expressed it mildly. To say that he was perfectly astounded at what he himself did would be to express his feelings not at all.

For some time he had been wending his way in and out among the jagged ice piles that line the shore of Behring Strait on the Alaskan side. It had been ghostly enough, this wandering, lighted only by the mellow glow of the moon and the white twinkle of the stars, the frozen surface of the sea taking on the appearance of a vast graveyard; each upended cake seeming a marble tombstone.

"Enough tombstones for every poor sailor who lost his life at sea since life began," he

had told himself. Just at that moment he had heard, or thought he had heard, a shuffling sound behind him. He had turned quickly but had seen no living thing.

"I must have imagined it," he told himself. "Spooky out here; have to get down to business. Ought to be a pool about here somewhere."

He was hunting, yet he carried no rifle. In one hand he balanced a single shaft some six feet in length. This wooden shaft, the size of a shovel handle, was tipped at the upper end with some sixteen inches of ivory, and at the other with eight inches of heavy bone, into which was set a slender shaft of ivory six inches long. This ivory shaft was tipped by a bit of bone into which was set a point of steel with edge as keen as a razor.

This was an Eskimo harpoon. Eskimo hunters use it for catching seal and walrus. The point of bone and steel is loose from the shaft, but is fastened to some forty feet of stout rawhide rope.

When one has driven this point into the

hide of his prey, the shaft drops off. The rawhide rope is held by the sportsman. As long as he does not lose hold of the rope, the seal or walrus is at his mercy.

Byron, who had but recently learned to wield this strange hunting implement, had come out in search of a little brown seal. A steak or two from it would not be unwelcome in camp. The heart and liver would be excellent. The remainder would be fed to the dogs.

"Strange how a fellow gets into such a place as this," he told himself. "Strange that I should be way up here on the top of the world, seventy-five miles from the Arctic Circle."

Just as he said that, his eye caught sight of a dark patch of water straight ahead. "Just the place," he breathed. "There ought to be a whole colony of seals living there."

Then, just as he turned to walk toward it, he caught again that shuffle. Quickly following the shuffle came a mysterious sound, a loud hiss like the hiss of a goose.

Wheeling suddenly about, he all but fell backward; his eyes bulged; his knees trembled. A

ghostlike apparition had appeared just behind him.

Not five yards from him, slowly rising upon his haunches, was the largest animal he had ever seen outside of a circus.

"A bear!" his lips framed the word, "a mammoth polar bear."

As the creature rose, he appeared to climb out upon the very sky, so tall he was. His mouth was open in a broad grin. Two half circles of ivory teeth gleamed in the moonlight. His forepaws swaying in air seemed the broken boughs of some giant tree.

This was the thing that had surprised him. But his own action surprised him fully as much, for without one single second of consideration of consequences, but quite as if by instinct, he poised the harpoon in mid-air, then hurled it right at the very center of the bear's ample breast.

The instant the shaft had sped, he realized the fatal blunder, realized it as fully as he might had he had a month to meditate upon it. The harpoon could do nothing more than in-

flict a painful and irritating wound. Left to himself, the bear might have dropped upon all fours and ambled away. But now —

The expression of hurt surprise that flashed over the bear's face as he suddenly doubled into a heap, was all but human.

He fell upon the shaft. It snapped like a pipestem. This action must have embedded the point more firmly between the bear's ribs for, with a roar of fury, he rose and went scrambling away.

Open-mouthed, the boy stood and watched him go. He was glad the bear was gone; the line attached to the point would be lost, but he was getting off easy at that. He was —

Suddenly, to his great consternation, he felt himself lurch forward. He had been jerked, not struck. He was thrown flat upon his stomach. With the breath knocked from him, with senses reeling, he was dragged forward over the rough ice at a terrific rate. His confused senses told him what had happened. When he had started hunting, he had tied the loose end of the walrus-hide rope of his harpoon about his waist. Jerry

Maxwell, his pal, had remonstrated, had told him it was not safe, but he had said that since he was not to hunt walrus but only the harmless, seventy-five pound seal, it was safe enough and he was sure not to lose the seal.

"And now the bear has me," he moaned. "He'll drag me to some dark pool of water, plunge beneath its surface and drag me after him. That will be the end of me." Byron felt helpless and forlorn.

At that instant, he remembered the pool of water he had been approaching when the bear found him. He wondered if the bear was going in that direction. In his confusion he could not tell.

Madly his mind struggled with the problem before him. How was he to escape? The rawhide rope was strong, strong enough to hold a two-ton walrus. To hope that it might break was useless. Vain, too, was the hope that he might loosen the rope. As he shot forward he heard the rope sing like a bass viol string. The knot was behind him; he could feel it press into the muscles of his back. The rope had slipped

forward. He was being dragged by the shoulders.

Two things were favorable: He was dressed in tough native-tanned skin garments and there had been a recent storm which had heaped snow against every jagged bit of ice. The skin garment protected him from cuts; the snow smoothed his path.

The whole thing would have been amusing had it not promised to end so tragically. "Like being towed by an elephant," he thought. "Bet that bear weighs a ton. Pity he hasn't a real load to haul."

This thought suggested the possibility of somehow hitching that rope to some two-ton ice cake. The thought was instantly abandoned. How was one to get an opportunity to hitch it to anything? He was not being given time enough so much as to scramble to his feet.

There came a second's pause in his wild ride after the great white bear. Byron's heart stopped beating, then plunged on as hope loomed. He saw what had happened. The bear, having crossed over a great pile of ice frag-

ments, had descended on the other side. The rope had caught in a crevice and had stuck.

Byron, half upon his feet, was feeling backward for the knot in the rope when, with a jerk that threw him flat and knocked the wind quite out of him, the bear tore the rope free.

The next instant the boy felt himself drawn up over the ice pile with the speed of a dry willow leaf blown upward by an Arctic gale.

Sudden as was his rise, his descent was even more sudden. So much faster was his drop than the speed of the bear that more than three feet of slack was gained.

"If only he'd go over a high enough hill," he told himself, "I'd get enough slack to set me free."

Then a terrible thought came to him. As he reached the crest of the ice pile, he saw dark spots in the distance; three of them; dark pools of water. Far away they might be, but not so far but that the bear might cover the distance in a short time. Once a pool was reached, instant death by drowning seemed inevitable.

And he must not drown. Suddenly he re-

called the fact that, locked in his own mind, was a secret, a great discovery he had made that morning. Major Clinton, head of their hunting party, must be told. Until that secret was shared by someone who could be trusted, he could not, must not, die.

One little gleam of hope came to him. Beside one of those pools he had seen a dark speck. The pools were far away and he had not, in that flash of time, been able to make out the nature of that speck. Was it a brown seal asleep on the ice, or was it a hunter? A hunter might bring him hope. Jerry, his pal, was somewhere hunting on this very stretch of ice. But his heart sank; Jerry carried only a harpoon, such a one as he had so foolishly sent crashing into the bear's breast. A poor weapon in such an emergency, yet Jerry would do his best.

His hope was short and ended in awesome fashion, for the bear, having arrived at the edge of a dark pool, plunged, without a pause, into its stinging depths.

The rope was thirty feet long. In a few

seconds Byron would be in the water. In less than a minute he supposed he would be dead. With a little gasp he seized the rope with both hands, in a mad effort to arrest the movement of the bear. The result was somewhat surprising. The bear was now swimming, not running. He paused, wheeled half about and looked back as much as to say: "Now why did you do that?"

Not knowing the power of a creature swimming in the water, the boy for the space of a few seconds was led to hope that he might be able to hold the bear in one position while he drew up the rope, gained some slack, slid the knot round to the front of him, untied it and fled.

This hope was short-lived. After one good look at the boy, the bear resumed his journey. His speed was not as great as upon the ice, but there was power enough there to move an object ten times the size of the boy.

For six seconds Byron's mind was filled with wonderings regarding death by drowning. In those six seconds he died six separate deaths.

He froze, he strangled, was suffocated, and who knows what other deaths he died. And still he lived.

That he should die, he doubted not in the least. True, the bear had not disappeared beneath the surface of the pool. He was swimming straight for the center of it. But sooner or later he would dive. That might be at the center or at the far edge.

All of a sudden Byron felt himself slide off the edge of the ice. The next instant he plunged into the stinging water. Even here he gathered a little hope. He was a strong swimmer. Might he not outswim the bear and gain enough slack to effect his escape?

Again hope died. It appeared that as an athlete the bear had him beat ten ways. With his Australian crawl at its best, Byron could not gain an inch.

Without a second backward look the bear swam straight on. Struggling only to keep his head above water, the boy expected every moment to be his last. Passing the center of the pool, the bear swam for the far side.

Straight on he paddled. Now he had covered half the remaining distance, now two-thirds, now all but a few yards. The critical moment had arrived. Hoping against hope, Byron told himself that the bear would climb upon the ice beyond, that he would be dragged back to a safe position on the ice, and that he might yet escape.

The next instant hope utterly forsook him, for the bear, with a grace that was maddening, tossed his head high to execute a semicircle with his body and disappeared beneath the surface.

Game to the last, the boy struggled madly to free himself, until it became evident that unless he followed the example of the bear and dived, his brains would be dashed out against the solid wall of ice that lay before him. Then he took one long, deep breath and shot downward.

That there was now a gleam of hope he did not dream, yet practice and instinct compelled him to hold his breath as long as it was humanly possible.

He felt the water rushing by him. There was a swift current beneath the ice. They were going with it. That the ice above him was of uneven thickness he knew from the lights and shadows that flitted past him.

His lungs began to pain him. There was a cramp in his chest. Like a copper kettle being hammered, his head rang. In another second his mouth would come open or he would fall into unconsciousness. Then all would be over. Tortured as he was, he now longed that the end might come quickly.

But what was this? Even as he was taking a last leave of the bright world of sunshine and flowers, of happy thrills and wild adventures, a dark spot appeared above and before him. A dark spot meant open water. There was yet hope. With a determination that set him writhing in the water, he held on until with three master strokes he brought himself to the surface of this second pool. With a loud "Oof," he released the air that was bursting his head, then, dropping flat on the surface of the water, he allowed himself to be dragged forward like

a log. The truth was, he was too near dead to offer further resistance.

What had happened came to him vaguely now. The bear, preferring swimming to climbing, had swum beneath the ice from one pool to the other. What would he do next?

The answer was not far to seek. This second pool was narrow. On reaching its farther shore Bruin climbed dripping from the sea. After shaking himself three times, he proceeded to climb over a great pile of broken ice.

Byron had been dragged all but against the ice that lined the pool; the bear had completely disappeared when the draw upon the rope suddenly ended. Summoning every available ounce of his remaining strength, the boy dragged himself from the water to the ice. There, too weak to do more, he lay still, while his water-soaked garments froze into boards.

As strength came oozing back, he dragged himself to a sitting position. A feeble struggle brought the rope round to a position where the knot was on his chest. Had this happened fifteen minutes before he would have felt himself saved,

but now with his fingers wet and benumbed, with the knot frozen to the hardness of stone, he was powerless to effect his own rescue. In his last extremity he thought of the dark object on the edge of the pool, the one he had seen when he was far away. Hope revived a little; help might come. And in the meantime, why had the bear paused? He was too thankful for this pause to wonder much. To be dragged forward as he was now would be torture indeed.

But the bear did not move; or if he did, he moved toward Byron and not away from him. At once the thought came to him that he might yet be attacked and eaten by the bear.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet to thrash his arms and jump madly about in an effort to soften his frozen garments.

"I'll give him a race for it," he told himself through chattering teeth.

All of a sudden, he stood still. A rifle shot crashed out. There came another, and yet another.

"A hunter!" he cried. "There's a chance yet."

But at that instant he felt a sudden tug at the rope. His heart sank as he went crashing upon the ice. That one terrific tug, however, was all he felt for some seconds. When there came another it was of a different sort. There was not the force to it. It was more as if someone was trying the rope out to see if it was fastened.

"Someone may have wounded the bear," he told himself hopefully. "Perhaps he is trying to drag himself away."

At that instant he saw a small brown head poked up above the ice pile over which the bear had clambered. The head was followed by a pair of narrow shoulders that belonged to a very small brown man who carried a prodigious rifle.

The small man's eyes followed the rawhide rope until it ended around Byron's chest.

"Oh!" he said disappointedly, "was that your bear?"

CHAPTER II

THE LONG TRAIL

Long as the time had seemed to Byron as he had been dragged by a giant of a polar bear at the end of the rawhide rope, and rough as the ice trail had been, it was a much longer trail that had brought him to the White North. The trail had begun in this wise:

They had been seated by a fire in Bear Canyon Inn, of the Cascade Mountains in the state of Washington, he and his pal, Jerry Maxwell — Jerry had been asleep in his chair — when a stranger had entered. This stranger carried a leather bag from which protruded some mysterious looking shafts. At first Byron thought them a bow and arrow.

"Can you bend a bow as heavy as that?" he had asked impulsively.

The stranger did not answer at once, but stood alternately blinking at the light and star-

ing at Byron, as if to draw the answer to the question from his own eyes.

This had given Byron an opportunity to study the man. He was tall, broad-shouldered, middle-aged. His hair was jet black; so, too, were his eyes. These eyes were the striking part of him. They gleamed from beneath his bushy eyebrows like jewels of black jade. "If a person's got a really keen mind," one of Byron's teachers had once said to him, "he can't hide the fact. You'll see it in his eyes."

Byron had gone this far in his study of the stranger when the man spoke.

"Why, no," he smiled, "I can't bend it; but why should I want to?"

Byron opened his eyes wide. Evidently he had made some mistake. The thing he had thought was a bow and arrow was perhaps something else.

"Why, I—" he stammered, scarcely knowing what to say.

"Perhaps you thought it was a bow and arrow," smiled the stranger as the light of a new idea flashed across his mind. "Of course

you might. Hadn't thought of that before. That's not what it is, however."

Stooping down, he unlaced a thong that held the bag tight about the shafts and, the next instant, held before the astonished boy two instruments which were beyond doubt some form of native hunting equipment, but from what land Byron could not tell.

"Harpoons," said the man simply, "Eskimo harpoons. This small one is more or less out of date. It was used in taking seals as they slept on the ice. The Eskimos shoot them now. But the large one, the one with a shaft that no man could bend, is of the type that is used quite as much now as it was a hundred or two hundred years ago. The natives hunt walrus with them in the open sea, in skin-boats, ten or twelve miles from land. Exciting sport, I can tell you.

"You see," he said as he slid easily into a chair by the boy's side, "if you shoot a walrus in the water, you're almost sure to lose him. He's hard to kill; takes several shots sometimes to do him in. Then after he is killed,

like as not he sinks and you never see him again. Not only that, but he seldom travels alone. Perhaps there are a thousand of his tribe within a half mile of you. You have a four-ton boat and can carry home the desirable parts of three or four of the big beasts. But the moment you shoot, the whole herd disappears and the one you get is the only one you carry away, providing you get him.

"If you harpoon them, however, you can run your skin-boat right in amongst them. They'll come up under your boat, go leaping about in the water near your boat and have a barking, bellowing, regular walrus picnic without being at all disturbed by your presence. You can even harpoon three or four of them and lash them to your boat and still they pay no attention to you. When you've harpooned as many as you can carry home, you begin to shoot, but not till then.

"This harpoon was made by an Eskimo. Some clever work on it. Want to look at it?"

"Be mighty pleased to," Byron had said as he took the shaft in his hand.

It was a remarkable piece of handicraft, that walrus harpoon, Byron was not slow to see. Always a handicraft fan, he had himself done some notable work in leather and bronze, as well as in wood and iron. To make a shaft such as the one he held in his hand required an expert knowledge of the working of ivory, rawhide leather, bone and steel. The evidence that the simplest kind of tools had been used in fashioning it was not far to seek, yet the rawhide thongs that bound the perfectly curved upper tip of walrus ivory was of even width and thickness. The hard whalebone which formed the socket for the setting of the steel-set point of bone was cut into a perfect cylinder. The wood shaft was round and smooth and was even decorated here and there with protruding buttons of ivory carved into the shape of seals' heads.

"Did an Eskimo do it?" he asked at last.

"Every bit," the man nodded. "That's not all; they were doing it quite as well long years before the white man discovered Alaska. You see," he smiled, "we white folks think we are very wonderful folks; and we are, in our way;

but other people are wonderful in their way, too, and that is the part we too often forget."

Jerry Maxwell had awakened from his nap and had straightened up to listen. "What do you get with that?" he asked, not having heard the first of the conversation."

"Walrus."

"And did you say you had hunted them in a skin-boat ten miles from land," Byron asked with growing admiration.

"More than once."

"How big is a walrus?" asked Jerry.

"Sometimes two tons; big as two or three fair-sized horses; tusks about two and a half feet long; not very dangerous though, not as much as you'd think."

"Never dangerous?"

"Almost never."

"Ever see 'em dangerous?"

"Only once; natives called him Old Saber-Tusk."

"But you got him?" persisted Jerry, eager for a story.

"We did not, and as far as I know, no one

else ever has. I happen to know that his herd went south into Behring Strait last autumn without a single member of it being taken by the natives, or by anyone else. In fact, the natives are afraid of Saber-Tusk; they think he's a haunt, a spirit of some dead walrus who has not slept quietly in his grave and has come back to get revenge for some lance-thrust in his side or a bullet in his heart. Superstitious lot, those Eskimos; got considerable Christianity on the outside, but at heart they are still the same old worshipers of dead spirits of whales, walruses and polar bears."

Both Byron and Jerry had leaned eagerly forward in the pleasant expectation of hearing a real hunting story from one who had acted a part in it.

"And you didn't get him?" sighed Jerry. "How — how'd he get away?"

"That," the stranger had smiled, "is rather a long story. I must turn in now. You see, I've been up at the Sunset Club giving a talk on 'Life in an Eskimo Village,' and since it was rather a long one, I am naturally tired.

"I expect to be here three days. To-morrow night I'll meet you right here in this very spot."

"Oh, Glory, that will be darby!" Jerry had exclaimed.

"It might interest you to know," smiled the stranger, as he rose to go, "that next month I am starting back over the old Yukon Trail and that I will then be headed for Behring Strait, which is the home of Old Saber-Tusk. Since I shall be there in the spring when he is sure to pass north into the Arctic Ocean, just as all walrus do, I hope to get another crack at him and to be more lucky than last time all right. See you to-morrow night."

That "to-morrow night" proved a wonderful one for the two boys. Major Clinton might be at his best when on the lecture platform, but he never had a better audience than when, before the open fire of the hotel lobby, he told his tale of the far North to the two seventeen-year-old lads. The love of adventure shone in the eyes of Byron Snowder and Jerry Maxwell as they leaned forward to catch every word of the story.

But it wasn't one story; the major had been

everywhere and had had many adventures. None, however, held the boys so enthralled as when the scene was laid in the shifting drifts of Arctic snows or out on the drifting ice of Behring Strait.

"If I dared to I'd tell you the story of Old Saber-Tusk," chuckled the major as he got up to stretch his legs — and give the boys a hint that he was growing tired.

"Dared to?" queried Byron perplexedly.

"If I told you about him you'd never be satisfied till you went along with me on my next try for him."

Of course that meant another story, and such a tale as it was, a regular thriller, part Eskimo legend and part the major's own experience. It all centered about a gigantic walrus, Old Saber-Tusk, "Azeezrukca (the terrible one)," as the natives called him.

Old Saber-Tusk was reputed by some to be as large as a whale, as ferocious as a barren-ground grizzly bear and as tough as a driftwood tree. As for his tusks, they were like the immense ones found now and then and known to

have belonged to that extinct monster, the mastodon. There were some, indeed, who went so far as to say that this was no walrus at all, but one of those long-list monsters who were known to have existed in the days when Eskimo folk-stories had their beginning.

Of course, few white men believed these wild tales; but then again, white men seldom hunt walrus and only one of them had seen Old Saber-Tusk, and that was Major Clinton.

The boys would willingly have listened till daylight, for they kept hoping that the major would tell of his own adventure with Old Saber-Tusk, but the story-teller finally yawned so emphatically that the boys made haste to bid him good-night, not, however, without his promise to "see them again."

The two pals were a long time in getting to sleep that night, for the stirring exploits of Old Saber-Tusk had made a profound impression on their adventure-loving souls. The last thing Byron said as his heavy eyes refused to stay open another instant, was:

"I'm going along with the major when he

goes back up there to get old Azeez — whatever his name was. If dad won't let me go I'll never forgive him — and I won't let up till he gives in."

Jerry's only reply was a long grunt, but next morning he insisted he had distinctly said, "Me too, old scout."

The consent of their parents was not so easily obtained. It would be a long and dangerous journey, and costly as well. But each boy had a small hoard of money he had earned in one way and another, and this he was willing to spend on the trip. Since their fathers had been adventurers when they were younger, and realized to the full the value of travel as a means of education, the affair was at last agreed upon, providing school matters might be arranged and the major's consent obtained.

Educational matters were easily disposed of. The school which these boys attended was of a new and modern sort. In it no student was held back for another who was slower. Each pupil might progress in his subject as fast as the keenness of his mind and his diligence would

permit. Byron and Jerry stood well with their comrades in the matter of many sports, but above all else they were thorough students. They found, on consulting their records, that they were several months ahead of the average of their class. So, since their standing would not suffer, they easily obtained permission of their instructors for the desired absence.

The arrangements with Major Clinton were most easily made. He welcomed them as companions and agreed to use all his great fund of information and his years of experience to make their journey a safe and easy one.

At Valdez, before they struck out over the long trail, he had aided them in selecting the team of seven dogs which was to carry them and their equipment to the far north cape.

He had selected for them, too, the boots, mackinaws, mittens and caps they should wear, the skin bags they should sleep in at night and the few camp tools and dishes they would need.

So they had started out over the trail, which, winding on and on, now passed through dark, overhanging forests, now down the glistening

surface of frozen rivers and now across broad stretches of barren tundra.

They had slept on hard board beds in road-houses, had fought blizzards, had frozen their noses and their toes, had experienced a touch of snow-blindness, but ever and ever, on and on, they had pressed their way northward.

Here they had sped through straggling villages, here passed the night in an Indian's tepee, and there arrived at a prosperous little mining city. Here they had lost the trail, then turned about to find it again, until at last, brown and ruddy with many days in the open, with muscles like hickory bows and lungs that expanded like a blacksmith's bellows, they had come in sight of a great, haystack-like mountain of snow.

"That," the major had said, brushing the frost from his eyelashes, "that is Cape Prince of Wales Mountain. We are near our journey's end and very close, I hope, to one or two great adventures."

CHAPTER III

"WE GO DOWN HERE"

The little brown man's question did not seem to require any answer, but Byron felt he must say something, so he replied, trying to keep the chatter out of his voice, "It *was* my bear — or I was his boy — I don't know which."

"I shot him. I am sorry," said the Eskimo simply.

"You needn't be," grinned Byron. "I'm mighty glad to get rid of him."

"You are a brave man. You had courage to harpoon him. I should not have had. I — "

All this time the small man had been climbing off the ice pile. Now an exclamation escaped his lips:

"You have been in the water. You will freeze. You are freezing now."

At that he rushed upon Byron and began

tearing away at his garments as if they were on fire.

When he had stripped off every thread, he began chafing the boy's arms and legs. The next moment he had stripped off his own long fur parka and handed it to the boy.

"Put it on," he commanded. "Not too big, but will do."

He next drew off his skin-boots, and with his feet protected only by deerskin socks, offered them to his newly found friend.

Byron's remonstrances were useless. Soon, strangely but sufficiently clad, he found himself being guided over the irregular surface of the ice by the Eskimo.

"Bear all right," smiled the brown man. "Ice not move here. Get him to-morrow maybe."

In his excitement and confusion Byron had lost all sense of direction. Where he was being led to now he did not know; he only knew that it was necessary to get to some shelter quickly. He had been told by the major that he might put implicit trust in an Eskimo's ability to get

out of a tight place, provided he was in his own territory, so, though he had as yet seen little of these strange people, he was willing to trust this guide.

They threaded their way in and out among the ice cakes and shattered piles, then came out at last upon a broad level stretch of ice that was doubtless next to the shore.

Dimly in the distance he thought he caught the bulky outline of a mountain, and he tried to get his bearings.

"That," he decided, "should be the Cape Mountain, but how did it get over there to the left of us?"

He had traveled forward for another hundred yards when he came to the conclusion that, since he had wandered far in search of seal, since the bear had dragged him a considerable distance, and since he and his strange little brown companion had been hurrying steadily forward for a full half-hour, they might be almost any place.

"But," he told himself in some surprise, "there is no Eskimo village south of the moun-

tain, and we are south of it. Where can he be taking me?"

For the first time he began to doubt the wisdom of following the Eskimo. "But then," he reasoned, "what could the fellow hope to gain by treachery? I have nothing he could by any chance want. He may want to keep the bear which he thinks I had a hand in capturing, but I have already told him he might have it."

He smiled as he thought of the bear. The Eskimo thought he had been attempting to capture the bear, when in reality the bear had all but brought his life to an end. Even as he thought of it now, he realized that he was sore in every joint and muscle from the bumping he had got.

"And he thinks I was brave, the Eskimo does," he laughed to himself. "Oh, well, let him think that. It may serve a good purpose some day."

Had he but known it, this belief of the Eskimo was indeed to serve him a good turn, and that not so many days hence.

That they had now reached the shore, he

realized as he tripped over a driftwood log and barely escaped being thrown upon his face.

Soon they were crossing over a series of low mounds, which he took to be sand dunes. To his surprise, on mounting one of these, he saw a pale yellow square of light spread flat over the very peak of the mound. This square, some two feet across, looked exactly like a great patch of fox fire. That it could not be fox fire, he knew well enough. Fox fire on the snow in this climate was clearly impossible; but just what it was he did not for the moment know.

He was wondering about this, when he was suddenly seized by the arm and dragged backward. It was the Eskimo who had stopped him. Now, as he glanced down at his feet, he found that he had barely missed walking right into a dark hole that yawned just before him.

"Wha — what is it?" he stammered.

"We go down there," the Eskimo said simply. "I go first; you follow. You sit down and put out your feet so." He sat down at the edge of the hole. "You put down your feet and drop so." He disappeared from sight,

all but his head. "Then you sit down again and put out your feet and drop again. Then you are part way there, but not all the way. Do as I do. Follow me." His head disappeared. He was gone.

Byron's knees trembled as he sat down upon the snow. It was spooky business, this following a native you had never seen, across the moonlit ice, to drop at last into a dark hole in the earth which might hide who knew what unknown terrors.

"But here goes," he whispered grimly. "One cannot freeze, and that's what I'll be doing if I don't get in somewhere. I believe my toes are already frozen. They feel dead as marbles."

At that he allowed himself to slip over the brink. He felt a strange sensation thrill him through as he shot downward, then landed with a thump, and all in a heap, on what appeared to be a wooden platform.

"That fine," encouraged his guide. "Now do it again."

Attempting to peer into the darkness, Byron saw not a solitary ray of light before him.

"Regular robbers' den," he told himself, "but again, here goes."

Once more he landed in a heap. This time, however, the floor beneath him seemed more substantial. It was as if it were laid upon the solid earth.

"This way. Stoop. Follow me," whispered his companion.

Byron did stoop, but not enough, for he bumped his head on an overhanging beam, and a smothered groan escaped him.

"Lower! lower!" whispered his guide.

All but crawling upon hands and knees, the boy moved forward. His shoulders brushed first this wall, then that one. His head now bumped the wall above him.

"Passage to a dungeon," he told himself, "couldn't well be any narrower."

"Lower! lower!" came in the same whisper. "On your knees."

Scarcely had the boy obeyed when a patch of light with a semicircular top, which reminded him of the entrance to a dog kennel, appeared before him.

This was immediately blocked by the body of the Eskimo.

"That," Byron told himself with a shudder, "is the entrance to this little wild man's den."

For an instant he held back, but the pale yellow light suggested warmth, and since, above all else at that moment, he wanted to be warm, he prepared to crawl through the hole.

CHAPTER IV

"THIS IS WHERE I AM HIDING"

The place Byron found himself in was a single room. Not more than twelve feet square but with a ceiling fully seven feet in height, it was to all appearances an underground den of some sort. The walls were of driftwood. Very solid logs, some of them massive, had gone into its construction. Whether the house had first been built and then earth and sod heaped about it, or whether a hole had been dug for the house, the boy could not guess.

A pale yellow light pervaded the place. This came from two rows of flickering flames, one to the right, and one to the left of him. As he glanced toward the ceiling, he guessed what had caused the square of yellow light in the snow above. There was a sort of skylight exactly in the center of the roof. The light from the flick-

ering flames fell upon the tissue-paper-like covering of this window and made it glow.

The place was unbelievably warm, especially when one thought of the cold outside. Yet why should it not be? No air could enter save through the passage by which they had come, and none could leave but by the small square above.

All this Byron took in in a single moment. The next moment he became conscious of the fact that he and the Eskimo boy were not alone. The boy was speaking, and that not in the English tongue. As Byron's eyes became more accustomed to the light, he made out the form of a small Eskimo woman. Seated cross-legged on a board shelf, she was as motionless as a bronze statue. Her big brown eyes were staring at him.

As the words of the Eskimo boy died away, the girl unwound her feet, leaped from the wooden shelf, and seating herself at Byron's feet, began very quickly and very skillfully to remove his boots. If he was astonished by her action, he was not less astonished at the next words of the Eskimo boy.

"This," he said very quietly, "is the place I am hiding."

"Hiding?" Byron's lips framed the word but did not say it. "Hiding from what, and from whom, and why?" he wished to ask, but checked himself just in time. "When one's life has just been saved by a fellow human being," he told himself, "he does not turn about and at once begin prying into his secrets. One is not responsible for information which he does not possess. One who asks few questions knows little, but is also obliged to tell little."

Having cleared his mind of these thoughts, he turned his attention once more to the girl. She was rather a pretty girl, as natives go, he thought, with a round face, olive-brown skin, great dark eyes and any quantity of jet black hair.

"Mebby froze a little," explained the Eskimo boy, as he saw Byron watching the girl, who, having removed his boots, was gently chafing his feet, every now and again allowing the warmth of her palms to sink deep into their chilled surface.

The feet prickled and pained, but Byron did not flinch. When the girl had worked over him for some fifteen minutes, she turned her face toward her companion and spoke to him in Eskimo.

"She say," smiled the Eskimo, addressing Byron, "she say that one your feet not so bad. Mebby sore two, three days, but that all."

"Thanks," said Byron. There was a ring of true gratitude in his tone as he added, "If it hadn't been for you they would have been frozen stiff long before this, and all the rest of me as well."

"Mebby," smiled the Eskimo. Turning to the girl he said a single syllable, "Si?"

"Eh-ęh," trilled the girl.

From a hook above one of the rows of yellow flames, which came from a seal-oil lamp, she took down a large copper teakettle of very ancient and interesting design.

After producing three porcelain cups that had half the enamel cracked off them, she poured a light brown fluid from the kettle.

"Cup tea?" said the host.

Nothing could have been more welcome. It was very weak and not overly hot, but it was tea, and it warmed him. Ere long he found himself stretched out on a deerskin rug before one of the seal-oil lamps, and gathering in quite as much of a sensation of warmth and comfort as if it had been a crackling wood fire. Byron felt very grateful.

Here was comfort and a chance to sleep. After his harrowing experience he found himself stiff and sore and very drowsy as well, yet dared he sleep? He put away all thoughts of danger to himself. If these people meant him harm, why should they have saved his life and treated him so well?

Then he thought of his friends, the major and Jerry. They had a right to know that he was safe. They might at this moment be wandering over the desolate stretches of ice in search of him.

"But could I find my way to the shack in the night?" he asked himself. "Would this fellow take me there if he knew the way, or would he not dare? As a fugitive from some-

one for something, what are his limitations of travel?"

Thinking of his watch, he drew it from his pocket and held it to his ear. It was still ticking. The water had not stopped it. Having consulted it, he found the time to be two hours before daybreak.

"I'll wait until it's light," he told himself as he settled back on the furs.

"That bear now," said his host moving uneasily, "whose bear is that?"

"Yours, of course," Byron smiled.

"But you were very brave. You harpooned it, and you had not a rifle. You shall have the skin. The meat I will eat, me and my coonie here." He put a hand on the girl's shoulder.

Byron was about to throw back his head and laugh at the thought of his own bravery, when, as before, he checked himself, to say a moment later:

"No, no; that won't do. I want the skin. I will prize it very much, but I must pay you for it." Searching in his trousers which hung thawing by the lamp, he managed to locate a small

coin purse and to extract from it a yellow coin, a double eagle. "How about that?" he suggested.

"I say—I say fine," exclaimed the Eskimo.

"All right, here it is. You know what it's worth?"

"I know. I work on American whaler two years."

"All right; you bring me the skin when it is dry."

"Where?" asked the boy, a startled look coming into his face.

"Tin City. Our cabin is there."

"Oh," the boy seemed greatly relieved, "mebby I do. Mebby you come after that. Mebby better you do that way, think mine."

"Either way."

"All right. Here I hide," the boy explained. "They think I go north. Me, I go south. Nowadluk, she come too. Come in blizzard. Can't see, can't hardly go. Freeze mebby. Mebby never get here. Get here though. Blow three days. Can't see tracks, nobody—you see?"

Byron nodded. He was more puzzled than ever, yet, as before, he asked no questions.

"What a wonderful place to hide," he told himself. "Up from the beach away from the main traveled trail, hidden beneath the earth, with the snow so hard-packed by the wild beat of Arctic winds that soft skin-boots leave no tracks, it could not be found by Sherlock Holmes himself."

Suddenly there came to his mind another theme and with it a question which he might feel free to ask. Turning to his host he said:

"Have you seen Old Saber-Tusk, the Azeezrukca?"

"Eh-eh, yes, I have," said the boy quietly. "One time I saw him."

CHAPTER V

FACE TO FACE WITH OLD SABER-TUSK

Feeling sure that there was not a person in the North who had laid eyes upon Old Saber-Tusk but had a thrilling story to tell, yet not caring to ask further questions, Byron sat with one ear wide open while he stared first at the yellow flames, then at the ancient teakettle.

"You wan'a know? You wan'a hear about that one, the Azeezrukca?" the Eskimo asked.

Byron nodded.

"All right, I tell you."

The host sat staring into a corner for a full minute before he began.

"It very dark," he murmured at last, "dark on the water and on the land; night and not any moon. We are in oomiak, you know, big skin-boat; ten Eskimo in boat. We go hunt walrus, old bull walrus. You know first come through

the straits great herd of walrus, mothers, calves and young bulls. After that, mebby six, eight days, come big bull walrus. Not many, but very big, these ones. Plenty meat, these ones, mebby four thousan' pounds. Plenty ivory, mebby twenty pounds.

"Old woman say, 'no go hunting,' say that old woman. Witch-doctors say 'no go hunting,' say that one. Say Azeezrukca, Old Saber-Tusk, come, say that one.

"Hunter say, wan'a go. Not much meat. Wan'a go, that young man. Go hunting, that young man. Me, I go too.

"Hunt all day. No walrus come. Getting dark, then hear bull walrus talk, plenty talk, 'Ouk-ouk-ouk-ark-ark-ark.'

"Afraid, two men, wan'a go home. Not afraid mine; wan'a hunt.

"We hunting. Pretty soon see big walrus; plenty big black walrus, plenty long white tusks, plenty ivory. No harpoon this one; just shoot; five men shoot. Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. Just like that.

"Pretty soon see walrus on water muckie

(dead). Then all Eskimo men glad. Plenty meat, plenty ivory, that one.

"See cakes ice, plenty fog, plenty get dark, wan'a drag that one walrus on ice, cut him up; wan'a save meat, blubber, skin, ivory; wan'a save all.

"Put rope on that one walrus, drag him to ice; wan'a drag him on ice. Plenty hard work that; 'Now! Who-hoop-who-hoop! Who-hoop!' Shout like that, Eskimo men. Plenty hard work. Pull mebby five minute, head come up on ice; pull ten minute, shoulders on ice.

"Wan'a get walrus on ice; quick come 'nother walrus like this one walrus. Such big tusks, such long whiskers, so black, so ugly, so fierce eyes, so loud 'Ouk-ouk!'

"Wan'a run, everybody. Wan'a shout, 'Azeezrukca! Azeezrukca!' Wan'a let-um go that one walrus we have kill. Wan'a run 'cross ice. Say, 'Azeezrukca! Old Saber-Tusk not walrus; spirit walrus! Run! Run!'

"All run, that Eskimo. Me, I not run mine. Me, I think my little brother hungry; my sister hungry. Not wan'a lose that one dead walrus,

mine. Pretty much scared, mine; not run, mine.

"See big walrus, mine. Put rope round cake of ice, me. Dead walrus slip in water but no sink. Hold rope tight to ice, mine."

"See live walrus, see Old Saber-Tusk, mine. Say, mine, very fast, 'Not spirit walrus; just big walrus, that all. Not spirit walrus! Not spirit walrus. Just big walrus, that all.' Say that, mine."

The Eskimo boy's eyes as he stared at the yellow flames had become large and round; his body had grown tense as a fiddle string; every muscle in his subtle fingers twitched with excitement.

Then suddenly he threw himself on the rug and lay there motionless, panting like a spent runner. When he once more rose to sit cross-legged on a deerskin, he spoke more quietly.

"Eskimo men like this. Some Eskimo like old-time Eskimo say dead whales got spirit, dead walrus got spirit. Afraid of spirits, this ones. Say Old Saber-Tusk him spirit walrus.

"Not say that, mine. Me, I sail two year on

whaler. Live like white man, mine, think like white man. White man say no have spirit that one dead walrus. Think that, mine.

"Me, I hang on rope, not let that dead walrus sink." Again his fingers trembled with excitement, his eyes bulged.

"Eskimo on ice, far off, shout: 'Run! Run!'

"Me, I no run.

"That one Old Saber-Tusk he go 'Ouk-ouk!' He jump right out o' water. Such tusks — like white man's arm. Such a big blackness his body. Wan'a run, mine. Not run either, hold rope fast, mine.

"Wan'a climb on rope, that one Saber-Tusk. Jump high, catch tusks on ice. Hang there. Tusks rattle. Br-r-r! like that. Wan'a come up. Wan'a come after me, that one Saber-Tusk. Can't come. Ice too high. One time; two time; three time try that, that one Saber-Tusk. All time fall back.

"Me, I am afraid. Me, my teeth rattle, 'Br-r-r-r,' just like that. But me, I no run. I say Saber-Tusk one walrus, one great big walrus, bigger than ever saw before. No spirit walrus,

that one. Spirit walrus walk on water, walk on air. Spirit walrus wan'a climb on that ice can do it quick.

"Pretty soon see our one big skin-boat, that Saber-Tusk. Jump right out of water, that one. Go 'Auk-auk!' that one. Make one big jump that one. Hook tusk on boat, that one. Then, 'Br-r-r-r!' Rip, slash, tear that skin-boat. Smash him bad.

"Mebby can't go back home, think mine. Mebby drift all over ocean, starve, think mine. Let rope go, mine. Take aim, shoot, mine. Shoot that Saber-Tusk, mine, shoot three times.

"All Eskimos shout, 'Run! Run! Run! For God sake run!'

"Not run, mine. Look in water, mine. Azeezrukca gone. Blood in water, that all."

Again the boy sank down upon the deerskin and lapsed into silence.

Time passed; the yellow flames died down. One went out, then another and another. The Eskimo girl's steady breathing told that she was asleep. A new, strange light came stealing over the place. It entered through the square above.

Day was breaking, another bright, bleak day of the Arctic.

"And you — you killed the Azeezrukca, Old Saber-Tusk?" Byron whispered at last.

"No, not kill," the boy shook his head; "just hurt a little, that all. Saw him another Eskimo mebby ten day after that.

"But that one skin-boat," he breathed, "one rib of that boat, big like harpoon handle, not break, not at all; cut that one rib, cut like with axe."

"Saber-Tusk did it?"

"Eh-eh."

"And that's why they call him Saber-Tusk?" The Eskimo nodded.

"Say same Eskimo," he resumed, "that one Saber-Tusk sharpen tusks like knife on sand rock by shore, say that same Eskimo. Not believe that, mine."

"But what makes his tusks like an axe then?"

"Can't tell, mine." The boy shook his head. Then, rising as if to indicate that the story was ended, he went to a corner for a can of seal-

oil. With this he replenished the lamps. The two rows of yellow flames were soon glowing brightly again, and outside morning began to glow as well.

CHAPTER VI

MAJOR CLINTON'S SECRET

Suddenly, as Byron rose to stretch his lame muscles, he remembered the man he had seen in the cabin at the foot of Dog Tooth Mountain. He was surprised that it had escaped his attention for so long a time. In the hour of his gravest danger, when it had seemed that he would not live to tell anyone anything, he had thought that the bearing of this news to Major Clinton was of utmost importance. And indeed it was important. Now that he had remembered it, he was eager to be away.

"I — think I should be going," he hesitated, looking at his host.

"All right, but you have not clothes," smiled the Eskimo. "Oh, well, you may have my deerskin parka. I have another of squirrel skin. Your trousers are dry enough, and your socks.

I have large skin-boots; one pair, you wear them. You bring them back soon mebby."

"To-morrow night."

"Eh-eh."

"But I don't know the way to our cabin," said Byron suddenly.

"Not so hard," smiled the boy. "You come out when you ready and I show you."

Having drawn on the borrowed garments, Byron stood for a moment by the opening which served as a door, before dropping on his knees and crawling through.

"You have no dogs?" he said at last.

"Oh, no. That would not do."

"How will you bring the bear meat?"

Bending far forward, the boy took two steps as if drawing a heavy load.

"You will pull it?"

"Part way; carry the rest."

"But we have two dog teams. We could help you."

"No — no!" the boy cried in alarm. "That would not do. Many dogs teams pass on beach. They smell track of 'nother team crossing their

path — 'Bow-wow,' up they come to my door and they find me. No, no, I do it — I strong."

Byron was soon out of this strange abode and making the best of his journey homeward. A very few words of direction had set him on his way, and he was sure he had not been misdirected, for did not Cape Prince of Wales Mountain loom directly before him, and did not Tin City nestle at the foot of it?

"Tin City." He smiled as he said the words. Tin City was a city only in name. It had never been a city; no, not even a town. Three cabins stood there side by side, and of the three only theirs was occupied. The miner who had named the place had been a man of vision. He had seen in his mind's-eye, built against the mountain-side, and spreading out over the tundra, a prosperous mining city. And why not? Tin ore had been discovered on the mountain and placer tin had been dug from the beds of streams. Tin was as much sought after as silver and gold. All that was needed, apparently, was someone to sink shafts, to discover the rich vein, then to develop it.

A shaft had been sunk. Just how deep down it was, no one at present appeared to know, except, perhaps, one person, and that person Byron was inclined to think was in the cabin, not at the foot of their mountain, but at the foot of Dog Tooth Mountain.

Major Clinton's real reason for coming north had not been that he might hunt Old Saber-Tusk. He had had a far better reason than that, though that was reason enough, since this terrible creature had thrown such a fright into the Eskimos that they scarcely dared hunt at all during his reputed time of passing, and were in great danger of starving because of the lack of food which might be obtained by hunting.

Major Clinton had come all this way on what he was pleased to call an "altruistic mission," that is, the thing he was doing was not for himself but for another. It had to do with the tin mines on Cape Prince of Wales Mountain. Byron knew little enough about it even now, but knew enough to feel that the man he had seen in the cabin at the foot of Dog Tooth Mountain must be a link in the chain which was

soon to lead the major to a mysterious and startling revelation.

One can think of many things during a five-mile tramp, especially if he is passing through a white wilderness where each quarter mile of the way looks exactly like the one before it and the one behind.

Byron did think of many things, his mind darting from one experience to another. At last he came back to the present and his polar bear ride of the day before. "The major promised us plenty of excitement once we got to the Straits," he said to himself with a chuckle. "I can't speak for Jerry or the major, but as for myself I will admit that I figure I've come through a great adventure. I have harpooned a polar bear, a monster, twelve feet from tip to tip. I harpooned him, and with the aid of my trusty native have brought him in. What's more, I shall soon have his skin as a proof of it."

His lips curled in an amused smile. That was the way he would first tell it to the boys of his class in school when he got home. He could

see them stare. Then as further proof he would show them the place in the bear's pelt where the harpoon point had entered.

After enjoying their hero worship for a half hour, he would tell them the whole story. He could feel even now on his back the drubbing they would give him after that.

CHAPTER VII

SHADOWS OF COMING ADVENTURES

"And there will be other adventures," he told himself as he rounded a corner and passed a deserted miner's cabin that loomed, dark and gloomy, out of the morning snow-fog. "There will be others quite as thrilling but not so dangerous and painful I hope." He was limping from a bruise on the knee and from his frost-bitten toes.

What all of these adventures might be he was not able to prophesy. That they might be associated with three mysterious sets of circumstances, he did not doubt.

First, there was the major's mystery. He had told the boys little about it. It was associated with tin mining. He had shown them some block nuggets of tin ore and had told them this much: The mining interests involved belonged to a widow and her children. One night

as they had been seated by a camp fire he had said:

"One seldom goes in for great adventure purely for the adventure's sake, nor for the profit which he himself will get out of it. Oftener he is thinking of others besides himself, perhaps those who are weaker, less able to take care of themselves. This is the great motive. If one enters into a great adventure from a purely selfish motive, when the supreme moment comes he many times is tempted to turn back. 'For,' he says to himself, 'the reward is not worth the trials and dangers.' But if he is doing it for others, he marches straight on, ready to face any danger, to endure all.

"What you boys have for a motive in coming with me, I do not know. Since you are very young, and are red-blooded American boys, it is natural that pure love of adventure should bring you over these trails. As for me, I have traveled far in the Arctic. I have had my share of adventure. I came north this time in the interest of others. First, the interests of a mother and her children, who are, I fear, on the way to

suffer a great wrong providing a certain person is not checkmated before he goes too far; second, in the interest of the Eskimos, who, because of their fear for this monster of the deep, this Saber-Tusk, the Azeezrukca, are being driven to the point of starvation.

"I have come to love the Eskimo people, because I have lived much with them. Anything I may do for them will be but part payment of the great debt the white man owes to them. Time and again some poor prospector, lost, snow-blind, all but dead, has been picked up by them, has been given perhaps the only food in the igloo and has been nursed back to life. It is because of this that I am willing to attempt the capture of Old Saber-Tusk. However, I am free to admit that the blood in my veins flows red enough, young enough and free enough still to cause me to thrill at the thought of a real hunt after master game on the black waters of the Arctic."

These, in substance, had been his words and, as Byron recalled them now, he thought too of the major's story of his encounter with Old

Saber-Tusk. In his attempt to recall this story and to compare it bit by bit with the tale told him by the Eskimo boy back there in the underground den, his memory was hazy on many particulars.

"Have him tell it over again this evening by the firelight," he told himself.

At that he glanced away at the white stretches of ice that still covered the ocean. Soon this vast field of ice would be fretting at its anchor. Then there would come a day when it would all go drifting out to sea, not to return for months. This would leave Behring Strait filled only by black, rushing water and through these waters would come the walrus. With them would be Old Saber-Tusk. Like ancient Norsemen they would shove their boat from the rocky shore and rush away to do him battle. He thrilled at the thought and all but prayed for an early break-up in the sea.

"Whoa there," he exclaimed, pulling himself up abruptly. "I do believe that's Old Clubfoot's track."

Old Clubfoot was a dog, not a man, and he

probably was not a real clubfoot, though that was what they had named him. Byron had followed his tracks for hundreds of miles at a stretch but had never seen him.

In soft snow this dog's footprints were not hard to detect. At some time in his eventful dog life he had met with an accident. His right foreleg had been badly injured, perhaps had been broken and clumsily set. At any rate, as he walked, his toes, instead of stretching out fan-shape, directly before him, were all turned a quarter of a circle to the right, so that they seemed always to wish to turn aside while the rest of him was determined to go straight on.

It was something of a shock to find the track here. "It's Old Clubfoot, all right," he told himself after close scrutiny.

And indeed there was little room for doubt. The wind of the previous night had sent a little eddy of loose snow over two chunks of broken ice and had piled it behind them. There had it lain, a perfect mould, soft and pliable, for the thing that should chance to impress itself upon it. Old Clubfoot had happened along and there

was his mark, as perfect as if it had been chiseled out of stone by a master sculptor.

"Have to tell the major about that," Byron mumbled. "It's mighty curious."

His mind traveled back to the time two months before when he had first seen that track. The dog was a wheel-horse in a team of eight. (The team had passed over the trail before them.) They had noticed his tracks on their first night out of Valdez at the very start of their two months of dog-team travel.

At that time the footprints had been fresh in the snow. "Not more than a day's travel ahead of us," had been the major's comment. "We may overtake them in a day or two."

They did not overtake them, not even in a week or two. But since there had been no suspicion in any of their minds that any person in whom they might be interested had taken the trail before them, they had made no effort to catch up.

It did seem a bit strange to strike out upon the trail each morning and to see here and there, impressed in the soft snow of forest or river, that same crooked dog track.

Even then they had thought nothing of it, for, as the major had explained, this man might be a mail carrier bound for Fairbanks or some freighter with a load of precious freight — special drugs, for instance.

When they had passed Fairbanks and were headed down the river to Nome, they were a little more surprised to find themselves still following that mysterious stranger.

Their interest, however, never passed the stage of idle curiosity, for there were men enough and dog teams enough making the entire trail to Nome in late winter: Merchants wishing to be on hand to offer new trade goods when the summer season broke; miners going in to superintend the washing out of low-grade pay dirt that had been taken from the mines during the winter; fur traders after the primest of fox, mink and marten skins; these and many others passed over this trail at that particular time of year.

Byron had borne in his mind a secret wish that they might catch up with the driver of Old Clubfoot. Once this wish had all but been gratified. Because of a broken sled, the stranger

had been obliged to lie over for a day at the Three Pines Road House. He had left the place but two hours before they arrived.

After that, by a sudden burst of speed he had put several hours of travel between them and had never been so close to them again. At Nome, a city of four thousand people and eight thousand dogs, Old Clubfoot and his master had apparently been lost to them. As they resumed their journey, bent on accomplishing the last hundred and fifty mile lap of their journey to Cape Prince of Wales, they had found no sign of Clubfoot's having passed on before them.

Indeed, this very moment was the first that had given any of them the slightest notion that Old Clubfoot and his master were any nearer to them than Nome.

Now as the boy studied the footprint, his brow wrinkled as he murmured, "I wonder if that man in the cabin at the foot of Dog Tooth Mountain could be the master of Old Clubfoot. I do wonder if he could."

As he turned to resume his journey he was in a thoughtful mood. Fifteen minutes later as he

still trudged on he declared, "I must tell the major — I really think it's important. Bet he missed a great chance. Should have caught up with Old Clubfoot and his master long ago. Anyway, that's how it looks to me now."

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAJOR PUTS TWO AND TWO TOGETHER

As he entered their cabin, Byron found the major drawing on his parka. Jerry was over by the stove devouring a hasty breakfast.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed the major, evidently relieved. "We've been hunting for you; we were out three hours before sunrise and were just going out again. Where'd you get your layout? Where have you been? What happened to you?"

At that Jerry, who was a short, solid, muscular boy with a smiling, freckled face, dropped his spoon and began asking questions so fast that Byron could do little more than stand and grin at them.

"If you'll give me a chance," he laughed, "I'll tell you that I've been out on the ice most of the night; that I spent the rest of it in a strange sort of Eskimo den; that I haven't slept

a wink; and that I'm about to fall asleep standing up."

"Tell us about it," demanded Jerry. "We thought you might be dead."

"And I might easily have been dead."

"Well, tell us," cried Jerry.

"Such a story as I have to tell," laughed Byron, "can only be properly told by the light of a driftwood fire. You get up a snappy, pitchy load of driftwood to-day while I sleep, then when night comes I'll swap stories with the major. The tales we have to tell will blend well with the crackle of your fire."

"Aw!" cried Jerry, "c'm'on, now! No time like the present."

"Nope," said Byron with an air of finality, "I'm too dead to do the thing justice."

"But you spoke of my story," said the major. "I have no new adventure to relate."

"An old one will do quite as well," smiled Byron. "In fact, it's an old one I want to hear — the story of your encounter with Saber-Tusk, the Azeezrukca. I want to compare it with one I heard not so many hours ago.

"That will be quite easy," said the major. "One does not soon forget such experiences."

"There is one thing, though," said Byron, as if suddenly remembering, "one or two things that I think I should tell you at once. You remember, Major, that you told us to be on the lookout for any person living in one of the deserted cabins in this vicinity? You said there might be one who was vitally connected with that mining business of your friend, the widow, and that if he were here it was of greatest importance that he be located at once."

The major nodded.

"Well, last night, before I went hunting seal, I walked over by Dog Tooth Mountain, about four miles from here, and set a trap for a blue fox who has a den over there. Right round the corner of a ledge from there you may have noticed a miner's cabin. It's merely a shack built of boards and tar paper, with a window on the lower side. It was getting dark by the time I rounded the rocks, and sure as I'm standing here I saw a light in that cabin; not much of one, but a light all the same. It turned out

to be a candle. But candles don't go lighting themselves in lonely cabins. Then I smelled wood smoke, and I knew someone was staying there, temporarily at least.

"I slipped up quietly as I could, and not wishing to be seen, hunted round for a tear in the tar paper which would give me a chance to peep through a crack between boards. It wasn't hard to find, for it's a fairly old cabin and the wind's whipped the paper about. When I got a good look at the inside I saw a man frying bacon over a rusty stove.

"Such a man as he was! I never saw a face like his — never knew that a human face could be so long. It was most all face too; not much forehead, but such a chin!

"Why, what's the matter?" he broke off abruptly. The major's face had suddenly become a study of surprise and doubt.

"You mean to say you saw that man up there?"

"I saw one that looked like that," insisted Bryan stoutly.

"There is but one like him in the world. Your

description of his face is perfect. Did he wear a large opal ring on his right hand?"

The major's excitement was evident.

"Yes, I noticed that especially."

"Can't be any mistake. It is the man. It is Ben Arnold, the old traitor. Why, the man he should have been named after, Benedict himself, was not so great a traitor. But to think of his being up here!" exclaimed the major. "To my certain knowledge he was in Seattle not a week before we started on our trip."

"Well," said Byron, "that's all there is to tell about that, except there isn't much of anything in the shack. Might have been some blankets in a bunk — too dark to see. Guess he isn't there very permanently. I didn't disturb him; you didn't ask us to; just told us to report."

"That's right," agreed the major. "You couldn't have done better. Leave him to me."

Byron was about to seek his bunk when another matter occurred to him.

"Oh, yes," he exclaimed, "you could never guess whose track I saw down by the beach."

"I'll take one guess," smiled the major. "Old Clubfoot's."

"You read my mind!" exclaimed Byron in surprise.

"No."

"Then how could you know?"

"Simple enough. I've been putting two and two together since you told me of seeing Arnold in the shack. It was he who preceded us all the way from Valdez. He is the master of Old Clubfoot, beyond a doubt."

"Well," said Byron, "if that's true, it's one mystery solved. But where were Clubfoot and his teammates last night?"

"Got them hid out somewhere, or maybe he's given them to a native down in the Kingegan village to keep.

"Well," added the major a moment later, as he pressed a clip of cartridges in his rifle, "you go on and have your sleep. Jerry and I may have a real adventure to tell of after all when we assemble round the camp fire to-night."

Since he looked at the rifle as he said this,

Byron was of the opinion that he meant to pay a visit to the cabin at the foot of Dog Tooth Mountain. In this guess he was not far from right.

CHAPTER IX

OLD JAGGERS AND HIS GOLD

When Byron awoke it was dark. Another day had passed. Since there was no light in the room, he assumed that his companions had not yet returned. Lighting a lamp, he found himself alone. A wind had risen while he slept and was raising quite a rumpus outside. Every now and again a wild whirl of snow was dashed against the window with such force that it sounded like handfuls of coarse sand.

"Wonder where they are," he murmured to himself. Hope they're not too far away on such a night. I'm afraid it's going to be a bad one."

Opening the door of the room, he stepped into a long, narrow hallway that served as a windbreak to the entrance. Finding this hallway crowded with piles of snowy driftwood, he brushed away the snow as best he could, then carried the logs in one by one to pile them up

beside the huge fireplace at the far end of the room.

"Jerry did his duty nobly," he smiled to himself. "We'll surely have a cheerful blaze to-night, and we'll sure need it. Br-r-r what a cold! Old winter's making his last brave fight." He had shaken down a large stove in the center of the room. It was now glowing red-hot, but the heat made little impression on the temperature of the room.

After placing a huge kettle of red beans on the top of the stove and hacking two thick steaks from the frozen carcass of a reindeer hanging in the hallway, he sat down with his feet on the fender to think. There were coals buried beneath the ashes in the fireplace, and kindling in abundance, but he would not light the fire until he heard the footsteps of his companions in the hallway. He would sit by the stove and think.

As he caught the sound of the rushing storm outside, he shivered and thought what the consequences might have been had this storm arisen while he was being dragged about on the ice by the bear. From that he began to think of his

friend, the young Eskimo, and wondered if he had succeeded in bringing the bear meat safely to his den. Byron hoped so, for these storms he knew sometimes lasted for a week. He and his little Eskimo wife would need the food. Byron wished that he might return the borrowed clothing this night as promised, but knew it would not be expected.

"Wonder what could induce him to live in such a hole, he and the girl, all by themselves," he thought. Then he remembered the Eskimo boy's remarks regarding those who were hunting for him, and how he had left for this place in a storm, that there might be no telltale tracks.

"Wonder what he has done," he murmured. "Wonder if it is the United States deputies who are looking for him. He might have been making moonshine; some Eskimos try that. He might have killed a reindeer that didn't just exactly belong to him. I've heard of such cases. But somehow he doesn't seem to be that sort of a chap. But then you never can tell — "

Suddenly breaking off his wonderings, he leaped to his feet to hasten toward the fireplace.

He had caught the sound of loud stamping in the hallway. The major and Jerry had come and he was jolly glad of it. They would be cold — now for the fire.

Pushing the ashes this way and that until a bed of red coals lay gleaming before him, he then threw on chips and shavings, light wood and small chunks, to be rewarded a few seconds later by a flash of flames and the laughing roar of a fire that went bursting up the chimney.

His two companions looked like snow men when they entered. With frost clinging to their caps and faces, with snow blown thick in their skin garments, they were a sight to behold.

"'Blow, wind, blow; not all your snow can quench our hearth fire's ruddy glow,'" shouted Jerry as he dragged his cap from his head to beat it against the wall.

They were closely followed by a pack of dogs and soon the place was awhirl with snow beaten from garments and shaken from the furry coats of their canine friends.

Byron watched the major closely. He believed in finding out as many things as possible

without bothering to ask questions. When the major wiped the dampness from his rifle, then stood it in the corner without cleaning it, he knew that no shot had been fired by him that day, for the major never neglected to clean his rifle even though but a single cartridge had been used in a day's hunt.

Neither the major nor Jerry said anything of their day's adventures until the beans and reindeer steak, topped by canned peaches and cheese, had been eaten with a hearty relish.

"Well," said the major as he drew his chair to a comfortable position before the roaring fire, "what say we make an evening of it? There couldn't be a better place for spinning yarns."

His glances strayed up the walls of the cabin, over the smoke-blackened beams, to the weather-beaten roof, then down again to the huge fireplace, whose stone hearth was twelve feet across, and whose crude andirons were spread to receive a ten-foot length of driftwood.

"This cabin," said the major, "were it able to talk, could tell tales of adventure and bloodshed that would make our poor stories seem like

nursery rhymes. It belongs to another age than ours, to an age when the gold of Alaska glittered all undiscovered in the beds of streams, when ivory, furs and whalebone were the only treasures sought by the white man, and when the whalers that visited these waters were little better than pirates. Indeed, some of them were real pirates, pirates from the coast of Asia.

" In those days men who had pressing reasons for leaving the States shipped on whalers and, with a little stock of trade goods, got themselves dropped off at some good hunting point on this mainland of Alaska. Then they would build them some sort of a cabin near an Eskimo village and become in time free traders, trappers and whale hunters.

" The old chap who built this cabin was uncommonly successful. He was a born organizer — have to be to organize Eskimos. He did organize them, though, into whale hunting crews. He furnished them with food and hunting equipment, and in return for this demanded half their catch as his share. Those were the days for whaling. Ten whales in a season was not con-

sidered a large catch. Nowadays if a single whale is taken it is an occasion for great rejoicing.

"Well, Old Jaggers, the man who built this cabin, prospered tremendously. He traded much of his ivory and bone to the whale ships for more supplies, and some he is supposed to have sold for gold.

"This cabin he built with the aid of the Eskimos out of driftwood logs. Wonderful timber drifting down the Yukon was lodged on these shores. See how massive they are. Built to stand, this cabin was."

The major paused, his glances once more straying over the interior. A fresh gust of wind rattled at the windows, to send wild sweeps of snow high against the door.

As Jerry's eyes followed those of the major, they suddenly came to rest in the very peak of the cabin, over the fireplace.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "there's a reindeer head up there."

"More likely a caribou head. Too large for a reindeer," said the major, "and, besides, from

the amount of dust piled upon it, I'd say it belonged back there in the days of Old Jaggers himself. There were no domesticated reindeer in Alaska in those days. They belong to the gold-hunting period."

The head spoken of was not mounted. After the skin and meat had been taken from the bones, it had been hung up there, a grinning skull and a pair of spreading antlers.

"Hideous sort of thing," said Byron.

"But what became of Old Jaggers?" asked Jerry. "Went back to the States with his gold, I suppose."

"No," said the major thoughtfully, "it's quite certain he didn't. He's supposed to have had a very good reason for not going back; robbed a bank, killed a man or something. Just what did happen to him, Eskimo tradition does not tell us. He may have been killed by some drunken Eskimo. If he was it would never be told. Eskimos killed the first white teacher at the village round the Point. Three of them were executed for it. Since that time they've been very slow to talk about such things."

"And his gold?" said Jerry, leaning forward eagerly.

"Oh, as to that," laughed the major, "there may have been none in the beginning. If there was, some thriving whaler's crew may have taken it, or the Eskimos may have found it. Tradition has it that the gold is hidden about this cabin or in the rocky hills above. Many's the search that's been made for it, but, as far as I know, not a single half eagle has been found."

Jerry's eyes strayed away to the gleaming skull of the caribou and it seemed to him that the thing winked at him.

"But what's this adventure of yours?" the major said, turning to Byron.

"I'd rather you'd tell of your encounter with Old Saber-Tusk first," said Byron. "I want to compare your experience with the one I heard."

"All right, everything in its proper order," laughed the major. "Jerry, throw on a couple of sticks of wood. There is nothing like the snap and crack of salt-laden driftwood to add spice to a tale."

CHAPTER X

A TRAGIC BATTLE

"Well," began the major, staring intently at the fire, "it isn't much of a story, that one of my encounter with the notorious Saber-Tusk walrus, but such as it is I think I can tell it best on a wild night with a fire such as ours roaring up the chimney.

"You see, I came up here expressly for a hunt; that is, I came to the Eskimo village around the Point. That is the largest village of the kind in the world, and before the reindeer herds made life easy for many of the strongest and best of them, there never were braver or more skillful hunters than those to be found in that village. Even now they do pretty well.

"I believe there is no place on the earth where so much interesting hunting may be found

in a single month as at Cape Prince of Wales on Behring Strait. You come in over the trail the first of May. At that time ice still crowds the Straits, and there is a fair chance that you may bag a polar bear or two. Brown seal and oogrook (big seal) are abundant, and on land there are those little 'mountain quail' to provide you with a day's entertainment and a splendid supper.

"But of course the great hunting time comes when the ice breaks up, and the schools of whales and herds of walrus pass north to their summer homes in the Arctic.

"Walrus it was that had brought me there that season. Two years before I had killed my polar bear; more than once I had been present when a whale was harpooned; but never had I ridden the waters of the Straits when the walrus were passing. One way or another I had always missed them.

"Came near missing them this time, too. Main herd passed in the night while I was asleep.

"One day, however, the Eskimos told me the

big bulls had been seen not five miles from the Straits. The weather was fine. I never saw a calmer sea. Gathering up my rifle and harpoon, I gave the head-man of the skin-boat a half sack of sugar as payment for my passage, and we were away.

"Those skin-boats are frail looking things. They have a skeleton frame of driftwood which is covered over with split walrus skin. Skin's not thicker than cowhide, and it's yellowish in color, so transparent that as you look at it from inside you can see every little wavelet that dances against the side of the boat.

"Well, we started out in one of these skin-boats, thirty-five feet long, ten Eskimos and myself — sail of blue drill and mast of driftwood; reminded me of the days of the old Norsemen.

"Even in those days Old Saber-Tusk had won quite a reputation for himself. In fact, I believe it had been as much as two years before that he had attacked a whaleboat manned by three white men and five Eskimos, and had completely riddled it. The white men could swim and were picked up by some Eskimos in a skin-

boat. Eskimos couldn't swim, so four out of the five were lost.

"This had made a profound impression on the natives, and ever after that when they went out after the old bulls, if they chanced to be Christian natives, they held a prayer meeting about it. If they held to their ancient views about spirits of dead whales, walrus and the like, the local witch doctor got out his weird masks, his singers and his tom-tom drums, and held a sort of native mass for them. Even after this was done some of them were too much afraid to venture out, for the instance of the whale-boat was far from being Old Saber-Tusk's last appearance. In the previous season he had twice attacked skin-boats, and in one of these two men were killed and a boy crippled for life.

"How he ever escaped their rifles and harpoons, I can't tell. Only thing is, such a walrus has a skull two inches thick and it takes a lot of body hits to kill him. Twice he had been harpooned and had broken the skin-rope that should have held him.

"Superstition still has a strong hold upon

the Eskimo people. In their ancient folk tales there appears a creature known as the walrus-dog. He was supposed to travel with the walrus herds. Being many times larger than a walrus and possessed of two rows of sharp teeth like a dog, he was sure to destroy any natives who dared to hunt on the edge of the herd he was guarding. Many of the natives maintain that this Saber-Tusk is no walrus at all, but a young walrus-dog who is yearly growing larger and larger, and who will, if not killed, in time drive all hunters from the Straits or destroy them.

"Of course that sounds absurd. But you never can tell. Remember reading about the discovery of a prehistoric monster living in a lake in Africa? Then why not up here? Jerry, touch up the fire a bit."

Jerry shook himself from the spell of the story to poke up the glowing coals and to throw on three heavy sticks of driftwood. These sizzled for a moment, then burst into flames. The snap and crack of the salt-seasoned wood seemed to stir the major to keen recollections.

"I'll tell you why," he said suddenly, "I

know Saber-Tusk is a walrus and not a prehistoric monster. Because I saw him with my own eyes and he not six feet away; saw his gleaming tusks, his bristling moustache, his greedy, gleaming little eyes. That's how I know." He pounded the arm of his chair for emphasis, then leaning far forward continued in a low, tense tone:

"We hadn't been away from land a half hour when a dense fog came drifting in. It's always that way on the Straits when there's a calm. Two of the natives were for turning back, but our head-man was a daring chap. I offered to donate the other half of the sack of sugar to further the enterprise, and that settled it.

"To add to the gloom of the fog, it was night; not dark, but almost worse — a sort of gloomy midnight twilight.

"Fog's peculiar stuff. You can fancy you see almost anything coming through it — a square-rigger under full sail bearing down upon you; an island looming up where no island should be; a whole herd of savage monsters surrounding you on every side.

"We had plowed silently through that ghost-like curtain of vapor for two hours. Every nerve was on edge. Even the most placid Eskimo of them all, old Teragloona, who had been appointed executioner for his own cousin years before and had done his duty like a man, was shaky.

"Then, of a sudden, someone whispered a word. The steersman turned the boat half round. Someone had heard something. I hadn't, and thought it was a case of nerves.

"It wasn't. Pretty soon I heard it; the bark of a walrus. It was far away and indistinct, but it raised the hair under my parka hood.

"Perhaps you've heard in the night the distant bark of some huge mastiff who is known to be vicious, and have imagined him coming your way. Well, it was like that only worse. A hoarse 'Ouk-Ouk-Ouk! Horook-Horook-Horook!' I tell you I saw every hand that held a paddle or an oar tremble, but they rowed straight on through that fog toward that lugubrious sound. That's what I call nerve. Jerry, stir up the fire."

Jerry stared at him blankly for a second; then, as if walking in a dream, seized a bit of drift-

wood and threw it on the fire. This was followed by two others, then, as it blazed up, he sank limply into his chair.

"Of course," resumed the major, a huskiness creeping into his voice, "there wasn't one of us all that could have sworn it was Old Saber-Tusk we were hearing, yet not one would have doubted it. Old Teragloona, he who executed his cousin, leaned over to me and whispered, 'I've heard as many of them as the people of my village have fingers and toes, but I've never heard one like that.' And there *was* a certain terrible note of defiance in it that made your blood run cold.

"Well, we had gone on toward that bark for some time, with it growing louder and louder, when all of a sudden it ceased. Not a sound. Not a low bark nor a splash; not a thing to guide us; but we kept straight on.

"If the old fellow's bark was terrifying, his silence was terrific. I've never felt a thicker silence in my life. You could have caught a whisper on a radiophone with your unaided ears, if any had been passing that way.

"Five minutes passed; ten; fifteen. I'd begun to think we'd missed him, and had settled back in my place, when of a sudden old Teragloona dropped his paddle, seized his harpoon, sprang for the prow of the boat and stood there motionless as a statue. I can see him still, face set, muscles rigid, harpoon tilted at just such an angle, silent as a sphinx. I knew there could be no mistake. Teragloona made none. He was that kind. And he had seen Old Saber-Tusk, none other. I read that from the look on his face. I tell you that was a tense moment. Jerry, the fire."

Jerry's mouth closed with a half-audible "Awk." With the utmost difficulty he dragged his eyes from the major's face, then rose stiffly to throw a single piece of driftwood on the fire, to drop into his chair again.

There was a cold smile on the major's face as he went on. "We hadn't long to wait. Came a rush of waters as of a giant water-wheel, a savage 'Ark-Ark!' then a huge head appeared not five feet from our boat.

"The next instant there came a loud thwack.

Teragloona had thrown. He had not missed. Instantly, it seemed to me, our boat received such a shock as turned it halfway over and set it listing hard to port. Just as we were scrambling for the other side, the strain suddenly gave way. The boat righted itself. Teragloona pulled in his slack line. Three feet of it was gone, the three feet next to the point that had been driven into the monster's hide. And, believe me or not, when I picked up the end of that rope I saw that instead of being broken it had been cut — cut as with a sharp knife."

"Oh! Ah!" breathed Byron. "That was exactly what I wanted to know."

The major was silent. A large metal clock ticked loudly in the corner. Neither of the boys had heard it until now. And now it appeared to have broken suddenly loose with a prodigious clatter. Jerry, glancing up at the caribou's skull in the corner, would have sworn that it nodded. But this perhaps was more real than it seems, for at that moment a shock of the storm, ruder than any other, shook the stout cabin until the beams rattled and creaked.

"And — and is that all?" breathed Jerry.

"No," said the major, a doubtful smile spreading over his face, "I only wish it had been. It was really only the beginning. However, the rest may be quickly told. Jerry — " He nodded toward the fire.

With a resoluteness born of despair, Jerry rose and threw on all the wood that remained beside the fireplace. In an instant the fire blazed up with such a savage light as made the beast's skull above appear a thing of marble. The major was obliged to move back into the deeper shadows before he resumed his story.

"Well, sir," the major tilted his chair far forward until he seemed about to leap into the fire, "I looked at old Teragloona and there he was in the prow, a coil of skin-rope in one hand and a second harpoon in the other, exactly as if nothing had happened. No, not exactly. There was a look on his face such as I have never seen on human face before. I think there must have been such a look there when he lifted the rifle that killed his best friend, his cousin, years before.

"That Saber-Tusk would charge again, he did not doubt, and he didn't need to. He did charge and this time he just grazed the side of our boat. Teragloona was there. You have to hand it to him; he drove his point deep and the rope was twice the strength.

"The thing that happened that time brought us all to our feet with a groan. When the old beast came to the end of his rope he never stopped. He went straight on. There came a crashing, ripping sound. The boat lurched to one side; I felt a rush of water at my feet. I looked to the right and what I saw set my mind reeling. I saw a pole swinging out to sea, and clinging to the pole with the fright of death on his face was a boy, a sixteen-year-old Eskimo boy, the only boy we had with us, old Teragloona's son.

"That pole was torn from the right side of our boat, ripped clean. The ribs stuck up like the ribs of a dead horse picked by ravens. The boy had been leaning on it when the monster tore it loose. In an instant pole and boy disappeared in the fog. Not an Eskimo of the lot

could swim, and I say it to my shame, neither could I. We never saw the boy again.

"Just how we managed to keep our boat afloat until we could reach an ice cake I hardly know. Once there, we tottered up the side by lashing our long paddles along the top end of the ribs. Next morning we reached home with a story to tell, but a sad one, for I tell you that boy of Teragloona's was an up-standing lad and the pride of his father's heart."

"Don't you think — " began Byron.

"I don't think; I know. Within a half hour of the time he passed from our sight that boy was dead. Not a soul could endure in that stinging salt water longer."

For a long moment, save for the racing metal clock and the roaring storm, there was silence.

"I am counting on Teragloona as head-man of our boat when we go after Saber-Tusk," said the major at last.

"Will — do you think he'll go? " asked Byron.

"Will he! I'm told that his greatest grief is that many of his fellow natives are so timid that he can't get a suitable crew for hunting the

monster. But with the aid of the three of us I think he'll make out. It was partly that I might aid old Teragloona in his revenge that I came up here this year."

"Perhaps," said Byron, "my young Eskimo will join us."

"Your young Eskimo?" said the major in surprise.

"Yes, the one who saved me from the polar bear. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "I forgot that my story had not been told. It's all so recent and so vivid in my memory that it seems everyone should know it."

"Your story shall be next," smiled the major. "Jerry, the fire!"

CHAPTER XI

A TRIP TO THE MOON

If Byron's story was less exciting than the major's, it was not because his experience had been less thrilling, but because he had not the major's skill for telling it. However, he told it well enough for a boy. When he came to the part where he was being dragged over the ice and through the water by the polar bear, even the major became so absorbed that he forgot to remind Jerry of the fire.

"That young Eskimo seems to be the right sort of chap," the major approved, as Byron told of their race, half clothed, across the ice. "I think he'd do."

"To go with us after Old Saber-Tusk?" said Byron.

"To be sure."

"I thought that too," said Byron. "But wait

until I have finished. You may see a real obstacle in the way."

The major smiled as Byron described the Eskimo's den.

"That," he said, "was not more of a den than any other Alaskan Eskimo's house. They are all alike; built of driftwood logs, then sodded over six or eight feet deep afterwards. They have to be built that way to keep out the cold. Shouldn't wonder if they were modeled after a ground squirrel's nest. The one you speak of was probably built years ago and later deserted. We'll find them all along the coast if we care to look for them. Your friend has taken temporary possession of this one."

"But listen to this," said Byron. Then he proceeded to tell of the Eskimo's statement that he had escaped in a night of storm from some persons who appeared to seek him.

"Probably United States deputies," suggested Jerry.

"I doubt it," said the major thoughtfully. "It's surprising the way these primitive people keep our complicated laws. I've known one of

them to follow a white man twenty miles to give him a small pouch of tobacco which he had left behind by mistake."

"Whom can he be hiding from?" asked Byron.

"Don't know. Got a guess, that's all," smiled the major, "but it has so little real basis that I'm not even going to tell you what it is now. Anyway, we'll take your Eskimo boy along if he'll go, and ask no questions."

They were destined to do that very thing. They did take the boy along and this got them into a fight that was not with any wild beast, but with men. The conditions and reasons were most extraordinary, but this must come much later in the story.

"That reminds me," said the major. "There's an affair coming off over in the native village round the Point that might interest you boys. Old Ne-pos-ok, the head witch-doctor, is planning a visit to the moon."

"To the moon! The moon!" echoed the boys.

"Yes," said the major, with a very solemn

face. "Witch-doctors among these people have for many generations been making such trips. Jules Verne is not in it with them.

"You see the Eskimo tradition has it that the Father Raven came from the moon originally. It was he who created the first man. Planted him in a pea-pod, he did. After three days this man tried to straighten out his legs and so burst the pod. He tumbled to the ground, began hopping about and men have been hopping about on the earth ever since. Father Raven went back to the moon, but it has been the privilege of the shrewdest of witch-doctors to take spirit flight and make him a visit at certain intervals since then. Jerry, the fire."

Jerry grinned as he brought wood from the hallway and threw it on the fire.

"How does he do it?" he asked, still grinning as he sat down.

"I can only tell you how he seems to do it," the major smiled back. "I've never really seen it myself, nor will you unless you hide out behind a cake of ice or pile of driftwood and listen in. The presence of white men at this ceremony

is strictly taboo, for the simple reason that they'd want to look into matters too closely, I suppose."

"But how do they go about it?" Jerry insisted.

"Well," said the major, drawing on his solemn face once more, "spirit flight can only be accomplished through fire. Fire releases spirits. If you are burned, your spirit soars. I guess you'd agree with them so far."

"Sure would," grinned Jerry.

"Well, when the time arrives for a flight to the moon, the doctor has his men arrange a huge pile of driftwood. This is set up in a circle with a hole in the center and a small gap at the back side. Of course, if you didn't have this gap the noble doctor couldn't enter, and if he did not enter that small circular enclosure, he couldn't be burned, and if he wasn't burned, he couldn't visit Father Raven in the moon.

"When all is ready, all the people assemble on the side opposite the opening; it is a dangerous taboo for any person to see the doctor take his place. However, he does take his place

in the center of the pile. Then all the wood is lighted about him until a circle of dense smoke rises all around him. On every side the flames leap high. The people in awed silence watch the flames and marvel.

"They listen intently and presently they hear the old doctor's voice saying, 'I am beginning to feel light. I am light as the wild duck that floats on the water. Now I'm light as a sea-gull. Now I am like a swan's feather that floats down from the clouds. Now I am a feather; now I am vapor; I am smoke; a breath. I rise; I rise. I go up — up — up. Farewell, my people. When the sun arises over the mountain I will return.'

"Then everyone shouts, 'He has gone! He is gone to the moon. He will return! Ne-pos-ok is a great doctor.' So they hurry back to their igloos and await his return."

The major smiled at the boys.

"And he returns?" said Byron.

"When the sun rises over the mountain," nodded the major.

"Huh, he never goes at all — just slips out

of that opening and skips," grumbled Jerry the skeptic.

"Now, now! my son," said the major, holding up a warning finger, "you are suggesting matters that I have no knowledge of. You forget that I have never witnessed one of these flights."

Jerry's eyes wandered toward an article fastened to the opposite wall, a rather unusual bit of equipment for an Arctic cabin.

"And when did you say this next flight was to come off?" he asked.

"Day after to-morrow night, I was told, on the beach before the doctor's house. Rather rough out beyond there, I believe; plenty of ice piled up there," smiled the major. "Mind you, I'm not suggesting anything, but don't forget that no such flight has ever been attempted when it was known that white folks were looking on."

"And they won't know it this time, leave that to me," grinned Jerry. Again his glance strayed to the wall. It was almost a loving look that he bestowed upon the unusual object hanging there.

One never knows what he will find in a de-

serted cabin on the shore of the Arctic. In one cabin there may be a hundred-pound bag of lima beans that has never been opened; in another a pair of palm-beach trousers; a complete set of dental instruments; a mariner's compass; a speedometer to an automobile; what does not one find? The affair that Jerry was looking at was one of those short, syringe-like chemical fire extinguishers which one sees hanging about on the walls of steamer cabins, on the sides of automobiles, and like places. How it had come there, Jerry had no notion. Whether it had been bought, borrowed or stolen he could not tell. That it was in a first rate state of repair and in good working order, and that it would extinguish a certain amount of fire with neatness and dispatch, he did not doubt. If he had any notion of using it on any occasion in the near future, he did not communicate this fact to his companions.

"Where'd you get all this glad news?" Byron asked of the major.

"We were over at the village looking for a

friend," answered the major as he hitched his chair closer to the fire.

"What luck!"

"That, I suppose," said the major thoughtfully, "is the next story of the program. That, I take it, will close the evening's performance. Jerry, how about a little more fire?"

CHAPTER XII

TRAILING A MAN

Jerry and the major exchanged smiles as Byron settled back comfortably in anticipation of a long and thrilling account of their day's adventure.

"As the war reports had a way of expressing it," said the major, "we have nothing worthy of note to report."

"You didn't see him?" asked Byron quickly.

"Failed utterly to connect with our man. There are days," said the major, now in a thoughtful mood, "when even the most event-filled lives are devoid of excitement. When we have no exciting events of the near past to think of, we turn naturally to the more distant past or to the future. When I have told what little there is worth telling of this day's doing, I hope you will pardon me for going a little way back into the past, then a little forward to the future

while I tell you why I am so particularly anxious to meet this man Arnold, whom I believe to be a rascal."

Even Jerry sat up and took notice when he caught these words, for he was very anxious to know more of the history of the events that had brought the major so many hundred miles over a winter trail to visit a land that was not new to him.

"Mind you," the major held up a hand as in warning, "I don't say this man Arnold whom I *know* to be a traitor; I say this man whom I *believe* to be a traitor. I may be mistaken. Better men than I have been, and that's a thing to bear in mind.

The boys nodded their agreement.

"First, then," he said, turning to Byron, "we visited the cabin you told us of and found it deserted. There was evidence enough, freshly burned ashes in the stove and litter about the place, to indicate that it had been recently occupied. We found one footprint in the soft snow which I believe to have been Arnold's. It was the mark of a very large native skin-boot.

He has large feet and would doubtless wear skin-boots, as most sour-dough miners do.

"We went down to the native village to look for traces of him there but found none. There were, indeed, several white men's dogs in the village, but these may have been dogs owned by Eskimos. They often trade for white men's dogs, especially leaders. Bird dogs and blood-hounds make the finest leaders because they have a splendid sense of smell which enables them to follow a day-old, wind-blown trail which no human being could possibly trace out. These dogs are of course not native to Alaska.

"That's about all there is to tell about to-day's proceedings. Now about the past and future:

"Lloyd Lovejoy and I were pals in school; that is, there were three of us: Lloyd, myself and a girl named Marjory Maynard. We were all from the same little town. We chummed it together all through college. Then, I suppose because he was better looking and more dashing, also because she loved him more than me, Marjory married Lloyd and I remained single.

There was never any hard feelings; never could be between real pals.

"I joined the army and rose to the rank of major in six years. Then, having gotten myself discharged, I came home. In brushing up old acquaintances, I found that Lloyd had done well in business for a time and had a nice home and three children, two girls and a boy, but that a year before he had fallen victim to the gold fever and had gone to Alaska. How he was getting on up there no one seemed to know.

"The next news I received regarding the family, was that Lloyd had died in Alaska. I hurried at once to his home to express my sympathy and to offer my services if they were needed. I found Marjory so stricken with grief that at first she was unable to tell me much of his affairs. At last she did tell me that he had had a partner named Ben Arnold, who was supposed to be an experienced miner; that together they had located some tin mining claims on Cape Prince of Wales Mountain; that he had taken one for her and one for each of the children, as well as one for himself; that he had always ex-

pressed the greatest confidence in his partner, and that beyond doubt in a year or two they would be immensely rich.

"Having been stationed on this coast for two years while in the army, I discounted these prospects somewhat, though I never told her so, but hoped they might get something comfortable, for there were, I knew, veins of tin on the mountain.

"Again I was gone for two years. When I returned I found the little home badly in need of repair, and the children going about in neat but very much patched garments. Knowing that there had been some life insurance and some money left from Lloyd's business, I was naturally surprised.

"When I called on Marjory, she expressed greatest joy at seeing me. She unburdened her mind at once by telling me all that had happened. It seems that this man Arnold is a blood-sucking leech, a swindler who does not stop at robbing widows and orphans. At least, that is what he seems to have done to them. Under the pretense of using the money to develop the tin mine

which he and Lloyd had located, he had wheedled from her not only her insurance money but all her business investments.

"'And now,' she told me, 'he has only just come to me with the news that our mine is not of great value, but that he thinks he can sell it to a large company which is able to handle low grade propositions, for enough to get back for me the money he has invested for me, and perhaps a little more. He asked me to give him power of attorney to sell at any price.'

"'You didn't give it to him?' I said.

"'What else could I do?' she said. 'We are all penniless.'

"'Then you did!' I exclaimed, starting to my feet. 'And he is doubtless a deep-dyed rascal, but I will get him. Give me power of attorney to wring his neck and I'll get it.

"'I give you,' she said, smiling through all her misfortune, 'power to do whatever you think best.'

"'You see,' I told her, when I could speak more calmly, 'this man Arnold has doubtless sunk a shaft where the outcropping of tin ore is

strongest and has at last struck it rich. He used Lloyd to help him to discover it and your money to develop it. Now he will sell it for a fortune and give you a pittance; perhaps not as much as you have put into it.

"'But he shan't,' I said, striking the table. 'He shall not! I will go to Alaska myself and look into the matter. Where is Arnold supposed to be at present?'

"'In Seattle,' she told me.

"'Very well; he probably intends to take the first boat in the spring. I will defeat his end by going in over the trail.'

"That," the major said, settling back in his chair, "is, as you know, exactly what I did; and here we are. However, we find our friend Arnold ahead of us.

"That doesn't matter," he exclaimed, suddenly springing from his chair and pacing the floor. "We'll beat him yet. We'll beat him! We'll beat him! We will! We will! Jerry, the fire. Throw on some heavy logs and we'll turn in for the night."

"Listen!" whispered Byron.

As they all stood at solemn attention there came the faint tinkle of sleighbells.

The major hastily turned the light low, then they all hurried to the window that faced the trail. To their surprise they saw that the storm had passed, the moon and stars were out and the white world about them gleamed away in the distance like a desert.

The bells they had heard were worn by dogs. Two teams were passing. Racing along at a brisk trot, their drivers followed the sleds. They did not appear to take any notice of the cabin not a hundred yards from the trail.

"White men," said the major quietly. "They hitch the dogs as we do: one ahead for leader, the rest by twos with a strong lead rope running between them back to the sled. Eskimos usually hitch their dogs fan shape, each dog having his own draw rope running back to the sled. Besides, those fellows have a white man's trot. It's different from that of the Eskimo, though it would be difficult to analyze that difference."

When the teams had rounded the point and had disappeared in the direction of the Eskimo

village, the major walked to a place by the fire. There he stood in a brown study for some time. At last he broke forth with the words:

"There's some mischief in it, I'll be bound."

"In what?" asked Jerry.

"Those two white men are up to some meanness or they wouldn't have passed us up. There is no greater discourtesy in the Arctic than to pass a cabin inhabitated by a fellow white man without stopping for a cup of coffee. Those fellows have come a long way. They are hungry and tired. They could not have missed seeing the light of our window nor the smoke of our fire. They would not have passed us up if there had not been a reason for it. When you see white men going in the direction of an Eskimo village pass up a fellow white man's cabin, you may pity the natives."

"Why, what could they do?" asked Jerry innocently enough.

"Think out the answer for yourself," suggested the major. "There are things enough they might do. The Eskimos are a childlike people and there are crimes enough that may be

perpetrated upon such a helpless race."

Just what the thing was that those two dog-team drivers meant to do Jerry was to find out soon enough, and it was to draw him into a most astonishing fight. Knowing nothing of this, however, he replenished the fire, crept into his sleeping-bag and was soon dreaming of sailing a boundless sea in a cockleshell of a boat surrounded by many angry monsters of the deep.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EARTH APPEARS TO SWALLOW SOMEONE

"Byron," said the major next morning, "our meat supply is getting extremely low. There used to be a great many ptarmigan on the mountain higher up, where there are still some frozen blueberries clinging to the vines. They call these birds 'mountain quail' down in the Rocky Mountains, and they are quite as good as quail ever dared to be. Suppose you take the shotgun and wander up that way. They are white at this time of the year, so watch close or you will miss them.

"Another thing," added the major. "The tin mine shaft I told you of last night has its entrance up there somewhere. Have one eye open for it. If you chance to come upon it you'll save me some searching. I'd go with you but the monthly mail team will be going

down very soon, so I must get some letters written."

Byron was glad of the opportunity to wander over the mountain. A born explorer and a lover of rod and gun, he could find no more congenial occupation. There were no polar bears on the mountain, he knew that. He would be safe enough, yet there always came to him a new thrill as he traveled over this all but unexplored wilderness, for he was always expecting to come upon some hitherto undiscovered gold mine, rich deposit of prehistoric ivory or some other treasure.

When Byron had gone, Jerry said that he thought he would wander over to the Eskimo village and locate the exact spot at which the flight to the moon would take place. His glance as he said this involuntarily strayed to the fire extinguisher, but if the major saw any sign in this he was too shrewd a man to make any comment upon it.

As Jerry struck out over the trail alone, he was not thinking of the old witch-doctor's promised visit to the moon, but of jingling sleigh-

bells and of the two men that passed in the night.

"Wonder what the major meant," he mumbled. "What could those fellows do?"

When Byron left the cabin he struck straight away a distance of only a few hundred yards, to the foot of the mountain. Here he began climbing the mountain by circling it in a manner that brought him nearer and nearer the summit.

He had reached a point halfway to the top when a sudden movement to his right caught and held his attention. He instantly lost sight of the object. Then another farther over flickered across the retina of his eye.

"That's queer," he said to himself.

Almost involuntarily he cocked his gun. The next instant it snapped to his shoulder; there came a loud report, followed by a wild fluttering of wings.

When the smoke had cleared away, he saw two objects thumping about on the snow. Quickly he sprang toward them. Two fine birds lay at his feet. The few brown spots on these ptarmigans, as they moved about, had caught his at-

tention. He had fired almost at random and had killed two.

As his eyes became more accustomed to the sport he was able to locate covey after covey and soon his bag was full. Not being the type of boy who kills merely for the sake of killing, and knowing that he had enough birds to satisfy their present needs, he was about to turn his steps downward toward the cabin when he thought of the major's request that he keep an eye out for the entrance to the tin mine shaft.

He decided to circle a little higher. "Any fresh digging would stand out like a beacon on these snowy wastes," he told himself.

Hardly had he resumed the ascent than a dark object to the right and above him attracted his attention. At first he thought it the mound of earth he sought. The next instant he was conscious of the fact that it moved. His heart skipped a beat. Was it man or beast? At that distance he could not tell. Size depends on distance and in this wilderness it was impossible to judge distances. This creature might for all he knew be a black fox whose pelt was worth

a thousand dollars, a skulking gray wolf that might have dangerous companions near by, a stray black bear which would be more than a match for a lone boy with a shotgun or it might be some human being.

"Might merely be an Eskimo hunting birds as I am. Probably is," he told himself, "but I am going to see."

Fifteen minutes later he had established two facts: It was not a beast but a man; it was not a hunter, for he carried no gun.

He was gradually closing in upon this stranger when, with a peculiar sliding hop, the man disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up.

In the meantime Jerry had wended his way around Cape Prince of Wales Mountain, had climbed many a jagged pile of drift ice, had rounded an even more jagged pile of rock and had come out at last upon a broad, flat stretch of sandy beach. Part of this beach was covered with ice and snow; the remainder was blown bare. In the foreground of this flat stood the government schoolhouse. Farther back, on

the edge of the hill, were numerous poles and platforms. These he knew from his previous day's visit were the hunting implements and caches of the natives. Their homes, buried deep beneath snow and sod, were marked by these poles and caches.

Having got his bearings, he struck away down the beach toward a row of caches that stood among the sand dunes close to the sea. One of these he knew to be the home of Ne-pos-ok, the witch-doctor.

As he came closer, he was delighted to see that a neat pile of wood had been placed on the beach before the doctor's cabin. It was close to the edge of the broken ice that covered the surface of the conquered sea.

"Good," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together. "That pile wasn't there yesterday. That's to be the bonfire which is to light his way to the moon. Perhaps," he said more slowly, "and then again perhaps not."

He circled the pile, then lost himself in the colony of upended ice cakes beyond. He walked as near as he could to the wood without seeing

it at all, then dropping upon his knees, peered out from behind a cake of ice, measured the distance to the wood pile with his eyes, then muttered:

"I wonder if it'll do it. I believe it will. Ho, well, if it doesn't, it doesn't, that's all. In life you take things as they are, not as you'd like them. You use what you get and make the best of it."

Then, like some general laying the plan of a campaign, he said to himself: "The crowd of Eskimos will be there," pointing to the sloping side of a sand dune which made an admirable amphitheater, "the old witch-doctor will be behind that pile of wood and his smoke screen. I will be here, right where I am." Lifting his hands he went through motions that were similar to a boy shooting a popgun, then threw back his head and laughed.

"The smoke," he told himself, "will hide me from the people and this cake of ice will hide me from the old witch-doctor. But supposing he charges over this way? Ho, well, then I suppose it is a matter of a game of hide-and-go-seek. I

used to be good at that when I was in school."

At that he rose and taking a circuitous route among the ice piles that he might not be seen by any native, close to Ne-pos-ok's wood pile he once more approached a row of pole sand caches which marked the location of many homes.

"Guess I'll go into the cosgy," he said to himself. "There's always something going on there: dance, jumping match, games, you can never tell what. Anyway, that's what the major says."

The cosgy is the common workshop and dance hall of the village. Erected and maintained by all the people of the village, it is the common meeting-place of them all. Day or night, one may find groups of these natives, half-dressed or not dressed at all, engaged in the native pastime of dancing, singing or going through the wild gymnastic exercises which fit them so well for their active life of hunters on the treacherous ice floes.

Had the boy known just what sort of game was going on in the cosgy at that moment and what violent exercises would be indulged in be-

fore he left the place, he might have hesitated before entering. Then, again, he might not have. You can never tell what a boy will do.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHALLENGE

When Byron saw the man on the side of the mountain drop from sight, his heart skipped a beat, but his feet did not falter; he pressed straight on.

"May be a sudden drop in the side of the mountain right there," he told himself, "then again it may be something else."

That he had discovered the very thing for which he was searching, he was not long in finding out, for, just as he dropped over a mound of earth thickly covered with snow, his lips parted in a low exclamation. Before him gaped a large hole in the earth. Since there was at the present moment no derrick nor other sign of man's activity here, his mind at first suggested that here was the entrance to the home of some monster beast. The suggestion sent a shudder through his frame. The next instant his face was wreathed in a smile.

"It's a mine," he told himself, "the major's friend's tin mine."

As he came close to the mouth he saw that the shaft had been sunk at an angle, not straight down, and that a pair of steel rails had been spiked across wooden ties and had been set on this slanting plane. That it would be possible for one to descend this track into the very heart of the mountain, he did not doubt. That the shaft was deep was testified to by the great mounds of earth which were piled along the lower side of the hole.

"And he went down there just now," he told himself. "Bet it is Ben Arnold himself. Bet — " He paused to consider. "Question is, am I going to follow? The answer," he told himself a moment later, "is yes."

Feeling in his pocket, he drew forth a small flashlight. Having made sure that it was in order, he gripped it tightly in one hand, balanced his gun in the other and began slowly dropping step by step into the black abyss below.

* * * * * *

The cosgy of the native village Jerry found

to be much larger than the ordinary igloo. The room, which one reached by creeping along a narrow passageway that ran first between white walls of snow, then beneath the floor, was some twenty-five feet square. There was no door. One entered through a circular hole in the center of the floor. Through this hole Jerry popped his head, then slowly surveyed his surroundings.

The room, in spite of the intense cold outside, was very warm. Six seal oil lamps arranged along three sides added their heat to the place, while the presence of twenty or more people did much to raise the temperature. The men, stripped to the waist, were dressed only in seal-skin trousers and low skin-boots. The five young women seated crosslegged on the floor and sewing at skin-boots as they chatted, were dressed in loose-flowing, bright-colored calico parkas, which showed every movement of their slender shoulders.

In one corner some young Eskimos were performing most astonishing athletic feats. Jerry saw them stand in a row, then saw one man leap out to the center and kick out with both

feet. To Jerry's astonishment, he saw the fellow's two feet rise higher than his head, then saw them come down again in a graceful curve to the floor.

"Wow!" he mumbled, "no need for athletic instructors here."

His attention was attracted at that moment by a muffled exclamation from another corner of the room. Following the sound with his eye he saw twelve or fifteen men closely packed in a circle. Sitting tailor fashion, squatting on their knees or standing with bodies bent forward, they appeared to be watching the actions of some persons in the center. The tense expression on their bronze faces told him at once that something of unusual interest was going on over there.

Putting his hands to the floor, he bolted up from the circular entrance, then walking across the floor chose a space in the circle where some very short spectators stood, pressed close to them and peered over their shoulders.

What he saw astonished him. He had never heard of Eskimos playing cards. Yet here they

were engaged in what appeared to be a most absorbing game played with those time-worn bits of pasteboard.

"Gambling too, I'll be bound!" he whispered as he saw a fine brace of red fox skins passed across the narrow circle.

The next instant he experienced difficulty in suppressing an exclamation. The man who had received the fox skins was not an Eskimo, but a white man, and by his side sat another.

"The two who passed our cabin with dog teams in the night," he told himself. "I believe I am beginning to see what the major suspected. Those fellows appear to have already collected a considerable pile of valuable skins by the gentle art of gambling, and I shouldn't wonder if they are crooked gamblers at that. If they are, they are about the most low-lived dogs I've ever known, robbing a simple-minded, child-like people that way."

This question did not long remain unanswered. Not that he himself saw anything amiss, but events developed with startling rapidity that convinced him of the truth.

He had watched the game for ten minutes without making head or tail to it, as it was not like any game he had ever seen played; then, remembering a remark made by the major: "Eskimos never do anything quite the way they are taught it by the white man," he decided that this game was an invention of their own.

Just at that moment there came the gruff but insistent tone of some man back of the players. It was the voice of some other white man whom Jerry had not as yet seen.

"Give 'em back," said the voice. There was a tenseness in the tone, yet one felt that the speaker must be smiling as he said it. "Give them fox skins back. That was a crooked hand. You took that ace out from up your sleeve."

The larger of the two white men turned with a twisted snarl on his lips as he demanded, "Who said that?"

"I did." Jerry could not see the speaker, but felt that things were up and doing. Should he drop quickly through the hole, or should he stick? He decided to stick. There was a certain gameness in the attitude of the one who had

challenged the crook that stirred his admiration.

"Who are you?" the crook demanded wrathfully.

"Don't matter nothin' who I am."

"What's it to you? They're not your fox skins. Come on, brother," the man's voice took on a wheedling tone, "let's be buddies. Don't queer a fellow's game."

"That's all right. That Eskimo's going to need them fox skins fer to buy flour an' sugar with before the break up, an' I don't aim to see 'em stole."

"Stole! Did you say stole?" The gambler's face purpled. Wheeling suddenly, he struck straight out behind him. There was the sound of a terrific combat. The next instant the place seemed alive with whirling arms and legs, with screaming women and grunting men all crowding for the narrow hole in the floor.

As for Jerry, he crawled out of the mass of humanity to sidle off to a corner where he hoped to remain unmolested until the air should clear. In this he was doomed to disappointment.

CHAPTER XV

"NOW I HAVE YOU"

The track down the mine shaft which Byron proposed to follow into the heart of the mountain was almost as steep as a ladder. The short ties which lay flat upon the earth were not over three inches in thickness. To make matters worse, the space above some of these was partly filled with earth. This offered but an uncertain footing. One slip and he might plunge to unknown depths below. Yet he dared not flash his light before him; the man ahead of him would see it at once. Whether the man would hide away in some recess of the mine was more than Byron could guess. His great desire was to slip upon the man unobserved, and thus discover not only who he was but what he was doing.

So, silently, he let himself down, step by step,

into the mine. That his descent might be as safe as possible, instead of sitting down and sliding from step to step, he turned himself face down. By clinging to the two steel rails with his hands and stepping with his toes from tie to tie, he was able to make fairly rapid progress.

The place had the dull cold of a refrigeration plant. There were no mine props; no need of any. The walls of this mine shaft were frozen to the hardness of adamant. The only way the shaft could be sunk was by the aid of a steam thawer.

As the boy moved breathlessly downward, every moment held its threatened calamity. Here a bit of rock balanced by the side of the rail and loosened by his hand all but went crashing into the dark depths below; now his right foot slipped and it was only by a superhuman grip of hands on rails that he escaped broken bones and possible death, and now a black bat shooting, snapping away over his head brought a startled exclamation to his lips.

However, he made progress. "Deep old

hole," he told himself. "Fool's errand I'm on, I guess. Might better crawl back out and let the discovery of the mine stand for my day's work."

He did not turn back, but dropped straight on down until, with a startling thud, his feet touched solid earth.

Putting out first one foot, then the other, he described little semicircles to right and left of him. This he did that he might be sure that he had truly struck solid bottom. After that, letting go of the rails, he crouched low, attempting to fathom the darkness. He might as well have tried gazing through the side of a battleship as to attempt to see an object in that place. One light glowed dully and far above him; that was the entrance to the mine.

There came at last to his waiting ears a sound, a tap-tapping that stopped at intervals, then was taken up again. This sound did not appear to be in the room. It was as if it came through a solid wall. Dull, indistinct, almost inaudible at times, it seemed to him to come from almost anywhere on the mountain. Having no notion of the conveyance of sound through frozen earth,

he fancied it might even be Jerry or the major chopping wood back there by the cabin, but he could only guess.

For five minutes he remained motionless. He was becoming chilled; his knees grew numb with cold; cramps set his feet aching.

"Wonder where he could be," he told himself. "You'd think he'd have a light. The mine may be cut up into rooms, never can tell. Wonder if I dare turn on my torch. Might as well. I'll freeze here without finding anything. Here goes."

His hand trembled as his finger touched the button. Came a flood of light making a yellow circle on the glistening wall of frozen earth. The circle made a complete round of the room, then came to rest in the spot at which it had started.

"Well," said the boy in bewilderment, "there's no one here; nothing but earth and rocks. Wonder where he went to. Wonder — "

His wonderings were cut short by the renewing of that tap-tap-tap. This time it sounded far more distinctly.

"Can't be outside," he told himself. "Must be inside somewhere, but where?"

The only answer was another tap-tap-tap.

"Ghostly sound way down here in the earth. Like Poe's raven," he murmured, "or like the spirit rapping at a spiritualist seance."

* * * * * *

Jerry was red-headed, freckled and Irish. Needless to say, he had seen many a free-for-all fight and had frankly enjoyed them. At times when the wrong person, the unjust person, the cheat or bully seemed about to win, he had mixed in with a real joy.

The fight that was going on before him on the floor of the cosgy interested him immensely. Not knowing how many helpers the man who had challenged the honesty of the two gamblers had, and knowing little concerning the justness of his accusation, he did not feel called upon to mix in. So he hovered excitedly about the edge of the combat, much as a referee might have done.

At first the frightened natives were so much mixed up in the general tangle of legs and arms that it was impossible to tell just how many

were actually engaged. Gradually, however, the situation cleared. Jerry was about to conclude that there were not more than three or four pairs of legs and arms left in the heap, when to his consternation he saw a hand raised high and in that hand an ugly-looking double-edged knife.

All in a flash his senses told him that the slim, tapering fingers of that hand belonged to one of the gamblers; that this was not to be a fair fight but cold, brutal murder.

The next instant he sprang forward. Seizing the arm as it stiffened for a downward thrust, he gave it such a shock as sent the knife crashing to the floor in a distant corner. This, however, was only the beginning. He was in the fight now. Whether he would or not, he was against the gamblers. Instinct told him that this was the just side; his wild Irish temper throbbing through his very being told him he would stick until death.

Death it might be, too, for already the gambler, much older, stronger and more experienced than he, was turning his whole attention to the

boy. Jerry's head came down with such a crash on the plank floor as might have knocked the senses from a less hardy boy. Not Jerry. Bouncing from the floor like a rubber ball, he struck out fiercely. First with right, then with left, he dealt the black scoundrel blow after blow.

Bellowing like an enraged bull, the man rose upon his knees, stretched forth his long arms, and before the boy could spring back, embraced him and bore him once more crashing to the floor. This time his viselike grip did not relax. Throwing himself full upon the prostrate boy he snarled through bleeding lips:

"Now I have you, you little beast. I'll kill you!"

Crushing the breath out of him, all but caving in his ribs, he sat upon the boy's chest while one long arm reached for the gleaming knife.

Jerry knew what that move meant. Just where the knife lay he knew, too. He struggled madly but vainly to free himself. With sinking heart he felt the man's hand moving toward the knife. Now it was two feet away; now but a

foot. Now — ah, yes, there was a chance; he could not reach it. If he attempted to move, Jerry would throw him over and make good his escape.

CHAPTER XVI

HIDING IN THE SHADOWS

After discovering that there was no one in the mine room which he had entered, Byron listened for a moment to the strange tapping, then proceeded to examine the place. It was a low vaulted room some twenty feet across and roughly circular in shape. The dirt had been thawed before it was taken out. The frozen marks of the pick were still visible. Bits of shale and rocks were strewn about everywhere. Many of these the boy picked up and examined.

"Don't look much like quartz to me," he whispered. "Just like any ordinary rock. Of course I don't know much about mining, but there's nothing here that resembles in the least way the black nuggets that the major showed us."

Having completed his survey, he was about to put his hand to the ladder-like track for his up-

ward climb, when he paused to think just what his position was.

"Here I am," he told himself, "a lone boy armed only with a clumsy shotgun, in a shaft which someone else has sunk into the heart of the mountain. A man went down here. I saw him. Where he is now I can't tell. For all I know, it was Ben Arnold himself. I think it was. How much does he know about me? Does he know that I am a friend of the major, who came eighteen hundred miles with a dog team for the express purpose of defeating him in any unjust deal that he might attempt to put through? If he knows this, what will he do if he sees me here and sees me before I see him? He might easily murder me and bury me in the frozen wall. No one would be the wiser.

"For all that," he told himself with a sudden start, "even if this is not Ben Arnold's mine and the man who entered is not Ben but another man, I might be shot as an intruder."

Cold perspiration sprang out upon his brow at the thought. The next instant saw him with redoubled caution scaling the slanting track.

He had climbed for perhaps thirty feet and was beginning to breathe more easily when his heart stopped beating as his ears caught a tap, tap, tap, below and to the right of him, and at almost the same instant his eyes caught the gleam of a light in the direction from which the sound came.

"Another mine shaft," he breathed. "He's down there. That's why I missed him."

Crowding back as far as he could into the shadows, looking, listening, waiting, not daring to move, scarcely breathing, he waited there in the dark.

* * * * * *

Just at the second when Jerry's mind had abandoned all questions save that of his own part in releasing himself from the crushing weight on his chest, and of saving himself from sure death by the knife, the gambler gave a sudden lunge to one side. So sudden was this move that Jerry was surprised into thinking he had been pushed. The next instant he realized his blunder. He had missed a possible opportunity for escape; the man had crowded him a short

distance across the floor and now had clamped his knees down upon his chest more savagely than before.

With a growl that was more like a beast's than a man's, he once more put out his hand.

"This time," said Jerry to himself, as his heart beat like mad, "his arm is long enough. He will reach the knife, and then—" His heart grew faint at the thought of what must follow.

He must have partly lost consciousness, for he heard, as in a dream, the labored breathing of two men who struggled for mastery, and knew, in a strange, dim sort of way, that this must be the other gambler and the man who had accused them.

Then, all at once, full consciousness came to him and with it the will to struggle, to battle to the end, to die game.

With a mighty effort he half rose from the floor. With every muscle strained, with back all but breaking and blood rushing to his head, he strove to throw off his assailant.

"No you don't!" the gambler growled.

At that he pressed Jerry's head to the floor with such a crash as caused the building to reel before him. At that same instant the boy caught above him the gleam of cold steel, knew it to be the knife and gave up hope.

Then, at that same moment, a strange thing happened. As if suddenly struck by an automobile or a trolley car, the gambler shot clear of him and went crashing to the floor some distance beyond.

Not realizing at all what had happened, the boy sat up and looked about. He saw an exceedingly grave-faced Eskimo of slender build seize the gambler, whose knife had slipped from his hand, by his two feet and swing him about, fairly cracking his head off, then throw him head first through the hole in the floor.

Having accomplished this, he sprang to the assistance of the white man, and a moment or two later, succeeded in landing the other gambler in that same hole.

Having accomplished this, the native seized a walrus harpoon from the wall, adjusted its point, then sat himself gravely down by the hole with

the harpoon carefully poised in his right hand.

"For all the world as if he were watching at a seal hole," the boy smiled. "And believe me, if one of those gamblers dared put his head up, he'd nail him!"

The place was in wild confusion. A hundred or more of valuable skins, white fox, red fox, cross fox, beaver, mink and marten, stakes in the broken-up game, lay strewn about the floor. Money there was, too, in abundance, silver dollars by the score, and a liberal sprinkling of gold pieces.

A small Eskimo woman with an exceedingly wrinkled face crept from beneath a wooden seat where she had been hiding and began putting things to rights. She placed all the skins in a neat row on a bench, then piled the coins one upon another beside them. Whatever else of value there was scattered about she placed beside these. When she came to the knife, her face became more wrinkled than before. With an ugly scowl, she left it where it was.

Jerry had sat watching her, but now he heard a gruff voice beside him:

"That was game of you, kid," the man was saying. "If it hadn't been for you they'd have done me in."

The boy turned slowly to look into the other's face. The next instant he experienced such a shock as he might had the floor suddenly risen beneath him and pitched him through the skylight. The man who had spoken, the one whose life he had saved, was none other than Ben Arnold, the major's hated enemy.

* * * * * *

There was only one thing of which Byron was certain as he stood there in the mine shaft shivering, and that was that the man some twenty feet below him was Ben Arnold.

The man with his back turned to the boy was stooped over, pecking away at some rocks with a very long, slender hammer. As pieces were broken off, he thrust them into a bag at his side. On his cap he wore a miner's lamp. This gave the only light that illumined the space below. This weird illumination flickered from wall to wall, casting a ghostly gleam of light here, there and everywhere, bursting into shapes

that seemed a thousand bat-like spirits seeking resting places but finding none.

As these thoughts sent an added chill up the boy's spine, the man abruptly straightened up and looked up the shaft to the spot where the boy stood. But if the man had any idea that there was another person in the shaft besides himself he did not betray that fact by his actions, for after stretching his cramped muscles he resumed his picking.

"That's what I heard when I was in the other shaft," Byron told himself. "It's clear enough what has happened. The shaft I went down is an old one. They missed the ore there but found it here."

Of one thing he was now certain: The man was not Ben Arnold at all, but a much younger man. Perhaps twenty-eight years old, with a smooth-shaven face and frank brown eyes, he seemed the kind of chap Byron would like for an older brother.

"Well, that complicates matters," he told himself. "I wonder if this is the Arnold mine at all. If it is, what's this fellow doing down

here? Is he our friend or is he a foe?

"One thing's sure," he told himself; "I don't want to be seen down here. He wouldn't attack me — isn't that kind — but all the same, that would complicate matters. I'll get out of here and report to the major."

At that, he began again his stealthy upward climb and, ere many minutes had elapsed, with a great degree of satisfaction he felt the keen, out-of-door Arctic air fan his cheek.

Having regained possession of his bag of birds, he dropped his gun beneath his arm and struck down the hill for his cabin.

"Not so bad, after all," he murmured. "Not such a bad day's work."

CHAPTER XVII

PERPLEXING FRIENDSHIPS

When Jerry looked at the man whose life he had saved and saw that it was Ben Arnold, he was speechless with surprise.

Ben Arnold was holding out his hand. Jerry did not take it, first, because he was powerless to move, and second, when this spell had been shaken off, because he thought for a moment that it would be an act of disloyalty to his good friend, the major.

Being Irish, Jerry's first impulse was to give every man his due. This man, Ben Arnold, whatever his past might have been, had on this day behaved most nobly. He had challenged the fairness of men he knew to be criminals and crooks, desperate men who would stop at nothing. He had done this, not in his own behalf, but for those who were too simple-minded to know that they were being robbed.

"Whatever his past," Jerry told himself, "this is one glorified present."

At that he gripped the huge hand of the miner in a hearty embrace.

The two of them stood there for a minute or two in confused silence. Then Jerry's eyes strayed to the watchful waiting Eskimo, who still sat by the hole in the floor, his harpoon balanced for a stroke. As Ben Arnold saw him now for the first time, he laughed a hoarse laugh.

"That's all right, Teragloona," he said, addressing the Eskimo.

"Teragloona!" Jerry started and stared. Where had he heard that name before?

"That's all right," the miner repeated. "They won't come back again, them dirty crooks won't. They had enough. Besides they're cowards. Every dirty crook that walks the earth is a coward, every man-jack of 'em, so you don't need to watch any more. I must say, though, you handled 'em neat, awful neat!"

He burst into a boisterous laugh as the picture of the sinewy Eskimo throwing the men headforemost down the hole came back to him.

"You think muckie (dead)?" queried the Eskimo, wrinkling his brow.

"No," exclaimed Arnold, "more's the pity! Can't kill a dog by throwing him a rod by his tail."

"Wha — what did you say his name was?" Jerry whispered, pointing to the Eskimo.

"Teragloona," the miner whispered back.

"Ever have a son?"

"One."

"Lost him?"

"Killed hunting walrus two years ago; fine lad he was."

"Then he's the one," said Jerry emphatically, "and I'm mighty glad of it, for he's a brick, a clear-cut diamond without a flaw!"

"He's what?" whispered the miner.

Jerry pretended not to hear the question. "Well," he smiled, "if the fight's over for to-day, guess I'll amble back."

Stepping to the side of the room he picked up the knife that, but for the Eskimo, might at this moment have been buried in his own heart.

"Nice knife," he said, with a sort of shudder.

"Real Sheffield steel, I'd say. If you fellows don't mind, I'll take it with me. Might come handy sometime."

"You're more than welcome to it," said the miner. "If you'd take a rough fellow's suggestion, though, you'll find a Wilson butcher knife more useful. All these Eskimos carry 'em. They're awful handy for cutting up walrus meat, eh, Teragloona? Show the boy yours."

With all his white teeth gleaming in a smile, the Eskimo whipped a stout knife from beneath his parka.

"So, you see," laughed Arnold, "we didn't use near all our cards this afternoon; not near all of 'em. It's always better to avoid bloodshed when you can. People don't always believe your story; not near always, they don't."

Did this miner refer to his affairs with the major and his pal's widow in this last remark? Something in the way he said it made Jerry think he might, but he could not be sure.

"Well, I'm off," he said cheerily, as he put his hands to the sides of the hole and prepared to drop through.

"I'll go with you a step," said Arnold. "Guess they'll leave you alone now, but you never can tell."

Once out on the beach the two tramped over the ice in silence. Just what the miner was thinking Jerry did not know. As for his own mind, it was filled with wildly confused thoughts. Uppermost of these was the hope that the miner would not accompany him to his own cabin door, for then, out of courtesy, he needs must invite him in. He would be forced to face the major, and that, of all things, he did not wish to have happen at the present moment. Most of all he wanted time alone and undisturbed to think things through.

"Life is so rotten strange," he told himself. "You get all nicely settled in your mind you love this man and hate that one; this boy is brave and that one a coward; this girl is true and that one false; this man is kind and that one a brute. Then, all of a sudden, something comes up that turns everything topsy-turvy, and you haven't the slightest notion where you're at!"

He was lost in these reflections when the voice

of the miner roused him to his situation.

"Guess you'll make it all right now."

Jerry saw that they had reached the foot of the mountain. He had only to circle that mountain and be home.

"Thanks — er — thanks, awfully," he stammered. "Hope — I — hope we meet again."

"We will," said the miner emphatically.

"Soon — er — "

"Very soon."

With these words the man turned and strode away.

Jerry stared after him for a moment, then resumed his journey. He was not a little puzzled. Truth was, he had taken a liking to this rough, uncouth man of the Arctic wilderness.

"How could he be a crook?" he asked himself almost savagely. And yet there was the major. The major had seemed sure of his ground. "But you can't help it if you like a man," Jerry murmured. "If you do, you do, and that's the end of it. Queer old world!"

He was thinking of something the major had

once said to him: "If you eat with a man, if you sleep with him in a deserted cabin, if you fight by his side in this wild Arctic wilderness, he has a truer claim on your friendship and fidelity than many a blood relation down there in the sleek, fat land of sunshine and flowers."

"I've fought by the side of Ben Arnold," he told himself emphatically, "and when a real show-down comes, I'm for him. In the meantime, I don't see that it's at all necessary for the major to know I've seen him. I'll tell them of the fight, but the identity of the stranger who fought by my side shall be a profound secret."

CHAPTER XVIII

BAD NEWS FOR SABER-TUSK

That evening, just as the sun was casting purple shadows along the mountain-side and cutting the jagged ice piles into a million geometric figures of alternate purple and yellow, the two boys came out of their cabin.

Dressed in mackinaws, as if for work, each boy carried in one hand a walrus harpoon and in the other a coil of rawhide rope.

"If Old Saber-Tusk is ever captured," the major had said, "it will be with the most ancient of weapons, the harpoon. No single rifle shot will ever kill him, unless by some great good fortune a vital spot is reached, and that would not happen once in a hundred hits."

That was why the boys had been hunting seals with the harpoon. If they were to succeed with their chosen weapon, they must be able to throw it with accuracy and force.

"But no ordinary rawhide rope will hold him," Byron had said to the major.

"That's true; but we have some extraordinary rope. Teragloona has been saving it for this very purpose. It is cut from the hide of a tough old bull walrus and has been tanned in such a manner as will give it the maximum of strength. Though twice the thickness of ordinary harpoon rope, it is so flexible that much of its natural clumsiness has been removed. I believe that in a short time we may get to throwing it very well.

"It is quite necessary that each one of us be able to throw the harpoon skillfully. There is no telling what may befall us on this hunt. Our head harpooner may be injured. We may be separated. I have an idea that it would be better if we do separate once we have sighted our prey."

"Will we have more than one skin-boat?" Jerry had asked.

"No."

"Then how can we separate?"

"Ice-pans," smiled the major. "There are sure to be some of these broad six-foot thick

cakes of ice floating about in the water near us. If one could succeed in attracting the monster's attention and tempt him to charge an ice-pan, he would have a great advantage. A skin-boat is easily torn up; a white man's whaleboat may be stove in and sunk; but a large flat cake of ice is as indestructible as a gunboat. We could harpoon him from there with perfect safety."

"But how would you hold him?" Byron had asked.

"Simple enough." The major brought a long shaft from the corner. The boys, who had not seen it before, examined it with as much interest as they had the harpoons that night back there in Bear Canyon Inn.

"What do you call it?" Jerry asked at last.

"A lance, modeled after the lances used by the primitive Eskimos north of Canada. The main difference is that the long tapering point on theirs is made of copper. Mine is made of steel, which is better. Those people actually kill a walrus or polar bear with no other weapons than a lance and harpoon.

"My idea is not to use this as a weapon, but

as a means of holding the rope. Once you have harpooned a walrus, you drive this lance into the ice, then wrap the rope about it close to the ice. You hold the lance upright. This gives you a tremendous leverage. If your lance-point holds, I doubt if even the king of walrus, or a walrus-dog himself, could escape. And, in the meantime, while the lance holds, many a telling shot may be poured broadside into the struggling beast by the lancer's companion."

Since all of this seemed based on sound judgment, the boys had been spending some time each day in harpoon practice. At times they hunted seals, at others they marked an oval figure on the side of a sloping snowbank and, pretending that the oval space was the side of a walrus, punctured the snowbank again and again.

So proficient had they become that out of a hundred throws made at a distance of twenty feet, they seldom had more than one or two misses.

To-night, as they limbered up their muscles, they suddenly found the major standing beside them.

"Fine business, boys!" he exclaimed heartily. "You have made splendid progress. There is need of it, too. I've just been out over the free ice. It is tossing restlessly, apparently eager to be away. The barometer is low to-night. I look for a wild blow from the south. If we get it, the Straits will clear. After that, it's not likely to be long before we launch our boat for the great quest."

"How about Teragloona?" asked Byron.

"Saw him over at the village to-day."

Jerry shot the major a quick glance. Had he seen Teragloona after the fight, and had he told all? If the major knew anything of the affair in the cosgy, he did not show it by motion of eye, lip or hand.

"But then he wouldn't," Jerry told himself. "The major is master of his muscles, just as every successful man is."

"Teragloona is eager for the try-out," the major went on. "He's got three trusty fellows who'll dare the adventure with us. We may be able to pick up one or two others. If not, we'll go as we are. Seen anything of your young

Eskimo? " he asked, turning to face Byron.

" No — not yet. You see," said the boy, " he told me he was in hiding. Wouldn't do to visit him in the daytime. I'm going over there tonight."

" And I," said Jerry, " am going to witness the old witch-doctor's grand balloon spirit ascension to the moon. Wouldn't miss it for the world. Unless I miss my guess, it's going to be a very unusual affair. Maybe a surprise to the old doctor himself." He let out a chuckle that caused the major to turn and stare at him.

" Whatever you do, son," he said soberly, " don't take any chances. Remember we need you on this hunt, and those old fake-doctors, once aroused, are mean as a she-wolf with pups."

" I'll be careful," said Jerry, as he poised his harpoon for a throw.

" Grip the handles a little more firmly. Be sure your thumb is exactly against the knob," counseled the major. " Make your throw straight away and as near as can be perpendicular to the side of your prey. That's the way to avoid a miss by a glancing blow."

"Are we to have rabbit or seal-heart for supper?" Jerry asked hungrily.

"Neither," smiled the major. "A native from up the coast brought down a sled-load of fish — white fish — and Teragloona got me three. They're prime."

"Fine stuff!" exclaimed Jerry. "On that I think I'm good for a dozen more throws." He hurled his shaft with such force as all but buried it in the snowbank.

"Don't overdo it," smiled the major. "A harpoon's as bad as a baseball. Don't want any glass arms in our outfit, so take good care of your old soup-bone."

At that he turned toward the cabin, leaving the boys to finish their practice.

"I wonder if he knows," Jerry whispered, as he followed him with his eye. "If he does, I wonder what he thinks."

CHAPTER XIX

A SURPRISE

"I scarcely know what to make of it," said the major, as Byron related his experience in the tin mine shaft. "You've discovered the location beyond a doubt. There's been no other shaft sunk to the depth of the one you were in. But who is this young man who comes gathering samples from it? He is an entire surprise to me, an unknown quantity. We must look into it. I'll go up there first thing in the morning. I may find him there, and if I do, I'll find out his business pronto. I've been entrusted with the managing of a half interest in that property and have a right to know what is going on there."

Both Byron and the major expressed considerable interest and no little surprise when Jerry related his hairbreadth escape in the native dance hall.

"So that was their game!" exclaimed the

major, as Jerry told of the crooked gambling. "I knew there was something; there always is."

"See!" said Jerry, "here's the knife!"

"The knife!" exclaimed Byron.

"The one that barely missed finding my heart!"

"What you going to do with it?" asked Byron with a shiver.

"Going to make a sheath for it and carry it. It'll bring me good luck."

Had Jerry been able to turn the pages of life ahead a bit and looked into the future, he would have seen things written there that would have made him willing, if such a thing were possible, to give the knife a sheath of gold.

Neither Byron nor the major asked any questions regarding the identity of the stranger who had broken up the card game. If the major guessed it to have been Ben Arnold, he did not say so. As for Byron, the matter very likely escaped his attention.

After a greatly relished meal of fish, red beans and native sour berries, the two boys prepared to go out.

A short time later, as they parted at the beach trail, Byron carried over his shoulder the garments loaned to him by the young Eskimo and, as a special gift to the Eskimo girl, a small sack of sugar.

As for Jerry, he wore the recently acquired knife in a rather bravado manner, tucked under the belt of a bright yellow mackinaw. Gleaming in the light, the knife seemed to Byron a single wicked winking eye telling of bloody adventures yet to come.

Beneath his mackinaw Jerry carried some object which made his mackinaw bulge conspicuously over his right hip.

"Be good," said Jerry.

"Be careful," was Byron's laughing response as they parted.

As Byron tramped along in the moonlight, he thought of many things. He wondered if he would be able to find the young Eskimo's den. He had not marked the spot very well in his mind. He knew there were three jagged ice piles to the right of the trail at this point and one to the left; that was about all. If he found the place, would

the Eskimo and the girl be there? If they were there, how would he be received? Would he learn more of their secret? Would he be told who was hunting them? He meant to ask the boy to go along with the hunting party, as an oarsman, and the girl as a cook. Would they go? If they went, if Teragloona went and all the rest of them, how would they fare in their hunting? Would they come up with Old Saber-Tusk? Would they bag him, or would they suffer loss at his hand? It was a perilous task, but he found himself eager to be about it.

What of the major's problem? Who was this new stranger? Would the major find him, and would he learn his business? Would he turn out friend or foe? Was there really a rich deposit of tin ore in the mountain? If so, who would at the end gain possession of it? Byron hoped the major might, for nothing could please him more than to see success come to one who worked unselfishly for the good of others.

With these and many more reflections he beguiled the time of his five-mile tramp. As he came close to the spot where the hidden den lay

away in the sand dunes, he dismissed all other thoughts but those pertaining to his present mission, and began keeping a sharp watch to right and left, before and behind him.

"For," he told himself, "I must not be seen entering the place. For the safety of my friend, I must not."

As for Jerry, he made his way light-heartedly around the mountain. When he had reached the beach before the village he did not follow it, but, turning to the left, soon lost himself to sight among the moonlit ice piles.

Having gone a half mile in a direction parallel to the beach, he once more faced toward the village, walked straight toward it for a few yards, then, bending down, went scooting like a shadow from ice pile to ice pile, until he had reached his objective; a huge upended ice cake not far from the village and scarcely ten yards from a great circular pile of wood that loomed up black in the moonlight.

"The stage is set," he murmured. "All that is needed are the actors and the audience. As for me, I think I might be known as a property-

man. All right, Mr. Property-man, make yourself comfortable until the show begins."

Drawing a square of deerskin from beneath his arm, he spread it upon the ice and sat down upon it, then gave himself over to the contemplation of things, past, present and to come.

* * * * * *

The major, who had settled down comfortably by the fire, and was enjoying for the twentieth time Charles Dickens' story of "Oliver Twist" was destined for something of a surprise that night.

Hardly had he buried his thoughts deep in the book's pages before there came a loud stamping in the hall.

"What," he exclaimed, starting up and flinging fresh wood on the fire, "one of the boys back already! Didn't expect them for at least an hour."

But what was this? There came a loud knocking at the inner door. The major leaped from his chair. A visitor in such a place as this, and at this time of night! It was quite unusual.

"Come in!" he shouted.

The door flew open and in stepped a tall man whose face was covered by the hood of a reindeer parka.

"Mighty unhandy affairs," said the stranger as he struggled with the hood. "Comfortable, though."

The next instant his face appeared, and the exact instant after that the major was gripping his hand and shouting, "Charles Markham, you old rascal! What a delightful surprise!"

"Thought you might like to see me," smiled the young man. "Heard you were up this way, so I decided to look you up."

A fresh plate of fish, coffee and beans, with sour berries, was in order, and after that a smoke by the fire.

"But what brings you to the Cape?" asked the major.

"A little mining matter — tin mine. Company asked me to look into some property they were thinking of purchasing up here. After I left the army I went in for metallurgy. And you?"

"Oh, as for me," laughed the major, "I am still just adventuring. Never have really gone in

for anything. This time it is to be a grand walrus hunt for Old Saber-Tusk himself. Ever hear of him? "

"Can't say I have."

"Interesting fellow. He has regular sabers for tusks — sharpens 'em on rocks. Latest I've heard is he's a man-eating walrus; only specimen ever known."

"No!"

"Yes, sir! Native told me that to-day. Says he was seen devouring a man. Strange part is, a hunter did disappear that very day. Probably the man drifted off on an ice cake and was lost. Walrus was eating a seal; they get one now and then. No Eskimo ever would get close enough to Old Saber-Tusk to be able to tell whether he was eating a seal or a man. Bad enough old fellow, at that; has wrecked a half-dozen boats and drowned at least that many Eskimos. So you see, we are really after something. But this mine? " He turned the subject suddenly. "Is there a man named Arnold interested in it? "

"I believe he's the man who has the sale of

it,'' smiled Markham. "I've got nothing to do with that, though; I'm merely to gather samples and test them, to find out as near as I can the value of the claim. My principals will be up on the first schooner after the break-up and close the deal. So you see I have considerable time on my hands. How'd you like to let me in on this little hunt of yours?"

"Nothing would suit me better!" exclaimed the major. "We need another man or two, and I could not ask for a braver man than my old friend, Private Charles Markham!"

"It's agreed, then!" cried young Markham, gripping his hand. "I'll keep tab on you and when the appointed day arrives, I'll be there!"

After that their conversation drifted to other scenes and other days, the days and scenes of their earlier army life. Nothing further had been said of the mine when, an hour later, young Markham rose and declared that he must get back to his shack and between the deerskins.

CHAPTER XX

THE DEATH THREAT

After Charles Markham had left the cabin, the major did not at once take up the book that tells of the many misfortunes that befell poor Oliver Twist. He had too many present and real problems to consider.

"So Markham's on the job," he murmured, rising and pacing slowly back and forth before the fire. "Well, I'm glad of that. He's a fine, manly, honest fellow. If a man's to oppose me, I like him to be honest. There's just one question I'd like to ask him when he's finished his survey of the property and has examined the specimens. I'd like to say to him: 'Charles, how does the thing stand? How much are you going to offer? Is the mine worth five thousand dollars or a quarter of a million?'

"But that," he said slowly, shaking his fist at the grinning caribou skull in the corner of the

roof, " is exactly what I can't ask him. He was sent here by a company. That company is paying him well for securing some valuable information. If he gave that information to me, he would be betraying a trust, and that is one thing a man cannot ask another to do. So, you old caribou skull, who have witnessed many a strange scene, you will never have the privilege of hearing me ask Charlie Markham that question."

After he had finished this speech, he stood staring at the caribou skull. Strangely enough, as he stood there all alone in that cabin, that was haunted by so much unwritten history, he experienced a feeling of lively interest in that shell of bone and that pair of wide-spreading antlers. He thought of Jagger's gold, and felt for an instant that caribou skull was the key to the secret of the hidden gold.

So intense was this feeling that he found himself dragging the heavy table from the center of the room. A chair resting on this table would enable him to reach the skull.

He had the table halfway across the room when he suddenly paused and with a loud laugh said

something about fairy stories. After this unusual procedure, he pushed the table back to its place, stirred up the fire, dropped into the chair, took up his book and was soon busily engaged in the business of getting Oliver Twist out of the clutches of Fagin.

* * * * * *

Matters moved rather slowly for Jerry. Things did not happen. He thought out all the affairs that needed thinking out. He shifted from his knees to his feet, then sat down. He studied the Big Dipper, and having located the North Star, marveled at the fact that it was almost directly over his head. Having done all these things, he shivered with cold and was about to give up all hopes of seeing the spirit flight to the moon, when his ear caught in the distance a strange humming.

"I — I — am — am — ah — ah — ah — I — am — ah — ah — ah — ah!"

It rose and fell like the rise and fall of waves beating on the shore.

It was now joined in by a drum. Another drum, more singers, still more drums, women singers, more drums, swelled the chant until it had all the

force and effect of a fifty-piece orchestra assisted by a chorus.

Heard in the open night it was wild, weird, fascinating. It sent strange sensations racing up the boy's spine and made him forget that he was cold, and all but forget that he was in hiding. In his wild desire to see the drummers and the singers, he was about to race out to meet them, when he suddenly sank back in his place.

"The show," he whispered to himself, striving to still his wildly beating heart, "is about to begin. The audience will be there; the musicians over there; the witch-doctor there; and I, the property-man, will be here. I only hope the chief actor will be pleased with the part played by the property-man. I'm fearfully afraid he won't."

He chuckled at this, then drew from beneath his parka a thing of shining brass, the fire extinguisher.

In the meantime the followers of old Ne-pos-ok, drumming and singing as they marched, were making their way toward the spot where the weird performance was to be given.

"Wonder how many there are," Jerry asked himself. "Seems like quite a crowd. Lots of the natives don't believe in Ne-pos-ok. None of our men do. Teragloona, the brave man, doesn't. None of the Eskimos should. He's a fake. More than that, he's dangerous, so the major says. When a native is sick, he tells him not to take medicine but to have faith in his wild incantations and he'll carry him through. Lots of times the natives die when they could be saved. Oh, well, as far as that goes, there are a few thousand white-man witch-doctors down in the States who are as bad. But here's one night when one Eskimo and his followers get a surprise!" He patted the fire extinguisher, then hugged himself in high glee.

The procession, led by the witch-doctor himself, was composed of ten drummers, some fifty singers, and as many other persons who had no part in the performance. They were led to the shelving bank. When they were all seated, the music ceased and the old doctor began:

"Ubogob — conok."

This much of his speech Jerry could under-

stand. It meant, "Look! Here is something that may interest you!"

Beyond this point he could not understand a word. But that it was an interesting speech made by Ne-pos-ok was testified to by the numerous "Ke-ke's," "Mat-na's," and "Ah-ne-ca's," that burst from the throats of his admirers.

When he had finished, he walked slowly back to the wood-pile, circled it, entered by the narrow opening behind, then shouted a single word:

"Ke-ke!" (Go ahead.)

Immediately, three young men, lighting torches as they came, darted forward.

"Oh!" breathed Jerry. "Now the show begins!"

As if afraid the thing would explode, he grasped the fire extinguisher firmly.

Almost instantly there burst from the circle of wood a dense black smoke which was cut through here and there by vivid flashes of flames.

These flames lighted up the marble-like ice piles in a way that made them ten times more specterlike than in the pale moonlight, while the black shadow of the smoke trailing away out over

the sea seemed some vast dragon, large enough and fierce enough to swallow all the human inhabitants of the world.

For a moment the boy's heart failed him. After all, it was but a prank; why go through with it? Why not see the show through, then sneak away home behind the ice piles?

This feeling left him the next moment, for to his ears came the droning voice of the witch-doctor:

"Now I am growing light; I am light as the duck that floats on the water."

Jerry thought of the little children who had perished because Ne-pos-ok had advised their parents to give them no medicine, and his heart turned cold as steel as he gripped the handle of the fire extinguisher and awaited eagerly the cue that was to tell the property-man to do his bit.

"Now I am light as the seagull that floats on the air," droned the doctor.

Jerry moved to a place where he could see the entrance to the wood-pile.

"Now I am light as a feather."

The fire seemed to burn with a fresh fierceness. The doctor appeared to hasten. "Now I am light as a snowflake."

Jerry gave the handle of the fire extinguisher a twist. There came from its nozzle an angry ziz-z.

" She works," he whispered tensely. His knees trembled; his lips moved as if in palsy, but he was game.

Then came the cue: " I go up — up — up — "

Jerry had given a certain deft turn to the handle. A whitish stream shot out and up. He raised the nozzle, then lowered it a trifle. The streamed played on the fire. A corner of the fire went suddenly black. The black spot widened, widened, widened.

There came the patter of padded footsteps. It was the doctor. Leaping from the center of the fast-darkening fire, instead of sneaking silently away in the ice piles till sunrise, he was thrown into full view of the audience.

There came a wild screaming gasp from the multitude as they saw their idol, who was supposed to be soaring away on the wings of a cloud

bound for the moon, miserably sneaking away to the ice piles to hide his shame.

The next instant Jerry had business on his hands. The doctor, having caught sight of him, and having guessed the cause of his disgrace, dashed at him, brandishing a keen-edged knife, and screaming between tight-set teeth:

"I keel you! I keel you!"

CHAPTER XXI

A HURDLE-RACE IN THE NIGHT

Byron had less trouble locating the home of his friend, the fugitive Eskimo, than he had anticipated, for, having come near to the place, he hit upon the scheme of leaving the beach and walking upon the crests of the sand dunes. These, lying away from the beach as they did, like a succession of snowbanks piled up behind a board fence, gave him many a sudden slide and many a short upward climb. In good time, however, his eyes caught sight of the thing he sought: the yellow square of light glowing up from the crest of a mound.

Letting himself down into the first little room, he crept along the narrow passageway, thrust his head into the entrance of the main room, and said:

"Hello!"

He got no answer. But as his eyes became ac-

customed to the light he made out the form of the Eskimo girl. Seated upon the broad bed-shelf at the other side of the room, with deerskins tumbled loosely at her feet, she stretched her arms, yawned and stared at the boy as if she had been asleep, which she probably had.

The next moment, with a lithe movement of her body, she sprang from her seat and began busying herself at replenishing the oil in the seal-oil lamps and trimming the moss-wicks along the sides.

When these blazed up brightly she brought two deerskins to the brightest lamp, then having seated herself cross-legged upon one of the skins, motioned Byron to a seat on the other.

After that, because she evidently did not know a word of English, and because he knew no more than a half-dozen words of her language they sat silently staring at the fire.

Once she turned, and patting his feet, smiled up at him.

He, supposing that she was trying to tell him that she remembered doctoring his frozen feet, smiled back at her.

Truth is, the patting of another's feet is the Eskimo's way of showing love for the owner of the feet. Just what was in the dusky maiden's mind at that moment would be difficult to say, but to Byron, who was wholly ignorant of Eskimo ways, it mattered not what she thought.

The truth was, he was busy with his own thoughts. He had fallen into a sort of reverie in which he saw himself, not a white boy but a young Eskimo hunter. Long before break of day he saw himself setting a sealskin sack horizontally upon his shoulders and placing across it a harpoon and rifle. In the sack of ammunition, a spare pair of deerskin sacks and skin-boots, also a few odds and ends of hunting equipment.

He saw himself wander out over the treacherous ice floes in the moonlight. He sighted a polar bear but lost him. He sat silently for an hour by a pool of black water, but no seal came up to the surface.

He wandered far out over the floes. Just as he was about to turn back empty-handed, he sighted a great bearded seal asleep on the ice. An hour of stalking and he lifted his rifle for a shot.

After that there was an exciting moment in which he raced to the spot to prevent the seal from slipping into the water, and having succeeded in saving him, severed his head from his body.

Because this great seal weighed hundreds of pounds, he dragged only a part of the meat and the skin home.

Arrived at the den in the midst of the sand dunes, he told the story of the hunt to a little brown girl. As a reward she gave him food and tea, stroking and patting his tired feet as he ate a much relished meal.

Then he sat by the seal-oil lamp until the drowsy warmth overcome him, and creeping into the warm depth of many deerskins, he slept the dreamless sleep of the hunter of the North who feels few sorrows and knows no fear.

"Not so bad," he told himself, as he awakened from this daydream. "Not half bad."

The lamps had warmed the room. His head was nodding. He could scarcely tell whether he was still sitting on the deerskin, or was buried beneath many skins on the bed-shelf, when there

came a quick loud thump from without that startled him into wakefulness.

It was as if his friend, the young Eskimo, having arrived home from a hunt, had inadvertently fallen headforemost down from the sand dunes to the floor of the outer room.

With a startled exclamation, he sprang to his feet. Then, noting that the girl had not arisen, and that she was smiling reassuringly at him, he sank back on the deerskin to await developments.

* * * * * *

To say that Jerry sprang from his place of hiding and leaped away into the shadows at sound of the witch-doctor's yell, "I keel you! I keel you!" would express it mildly. He literally flew.

He had no desire to mix with the enraged Eskimo. True, there was the knife at his belt, but the doctor was much older and had far more experience in knife battles. The fight, if fight they must, might end disastrously. Besides, he had no relish for bloodshed, no matter who shed it.

Leaping silently into the shadow of an ice pile, he raced away toward the sea, then, turning suddenly, he shot away to the left.

The Eskimo was a swift runner and a shrewd follower. His ancestors had not dogged the tracks of polar bears on this same ice field for naught. He was not to be shaken off.

The boy, dodging from shadow to shadow, turned first to right, then to left, doubled back, sprinted straight away, but always there came that pit-pat of hurrying feet and the dark bulk of an infuriated native.

Breathing hard, perspiring at every pore, bewildered, all but outdone, the boy sought in vain for a way of escape.

He could of course lead the man to their cabin and dart inside. That would save him, but this was the last thing he wished to do. He did not wish to have the Eskimo know who he was; he had worn the yellow mackinaw, which was not his own, for this very reason.

"What a mess!" he panted. "No, I don't wish I hadn't done it. The old fake deserved it. And if it was only a fist affair, I'd stop and take a chance of giving him a good beating up. But knives! Oh, boy!"

When Jerry found himself in a corner, he al-

ways went through his bag of tricks to discover, if possible, one that would get him out of his trouble. He had thought he was some nobby little racer. But, after leaping countless upended ice cakes and pressure ridges, after dodging this way and that for what seemed an endless space of time, he was no safer than in the beginning. This trick had utterly failed him.

There was one other stunt for which he had been famous at school, the running broad jump.

"But how can I use that here?" he asked himself.

A few minutes later the answer came.

He turned directly to the right, away from the shore. He then slowed down somewhat, as if fatigued and about to give up. Truth was, he was hoarding his little remaining strength for a supreme effort.

He expected the Eskimo to close the gap that lay between them. In this the doctor came up to expectations nobly. Now he had gained twenty yards, now forty, now sixty. And now the boy could catch the sound of his hoarse and labored breathing.

"Like the panting of a mad wolf, which he is," Jerry thought.

Suddenly, as he sped on, he saw just before him a stretch of black water. Not hesitating for a second, instead, redoubling his speed, he reached the very brink of the chasm, then rising like a bird, went sailing through space.

There followed an agonizing instant. The water beneath him was stinging, freezing cold. The thermometer stood at forty below. To plunge into the water was almost sure death. Would he make it? Would he—

Yes, his feet touched solid ice. He stumbled and all but fell back, then, throwing himself forward in one last supreme effect, he fell flat upon the ice beyond.

At that time through his mind there flashed a sentence: "Between me and thee there is a great gap fixed."

It was quite true. The ice on which Jerry rested was drifting slowly toward the North Pole; that on which the witch-doctor stood was solidly attached to the shore. This narrow ribbon of dark water extended for many miles.

"He can follow it all day and all night and find no crossing," grinned Jerry. "It's as wide at one place as it is at all others. And he can't jump it. I'll swear he can't. I doubt if I could under ordinary circumstances myself."

Just then there entered his mind a disturbing question. "Without a man and a knife behind me, I wonder if I can do it myself; and if I can't, how am I ever to get back to the shore ice and our cabin?"

CHAPTER XXII

STRATEGY

The sudden thud which Byron had heard at the entrance of the Eskimo's hiding-place was not caused by someone falling through the hole in the top, but by a heavy frozen bundle of polar bear skin thrown from above. The young hunter had left this part of the bear which he and Byron had captured two nights before, to the last, and was now returning home with it.

He came crawling into the main room, a minute or two later, dragging the skin after him.

He smiled with pleasure at sight of Byron, and at once rolled the skin over with the head on top, so the boy could see what a monster it was.

Byron placed his hands side by side and thus made a rough guess at the distance between the ears.

"Sixteen inches!" he exclaimed. "What a whopper!"

"Yes," grinned the Eskimo, well pleased with Byron's delighted surprise.

When the skin had been deposited near one of the lamps, Byron at once brought up the question of securing the services of the pair on the proposed walrus hunt.

"Yes, yes, I like to hunt walrus," smiled the Eskimo. "No, no, I am not afraid of Old Saber-Tusk. He is, after all, only a walrus. Besides, is not Teragloona a brave hunter? Are not all his men brave? And most of all, are not you, the Alongmeet (white man), more brave than any other? Did you not harpoon that great bear when you had no rifle to shoot? Yes, I will go. Only — but," his face clouded, "I cannot go from the Eskimo village!"

The boy looked eager.

"Oh, that's all right," smiled Byron. "We're not leaving from the village. Teragloona and his men are to bring the skin-boat to the edge of the shore ice before our cabin. We will put aboard our food and hunting traps there, and there you may join us, if you will, you and the girl. But then," he said, after a moment's

thought, "perhaps we ought not to ask the girl to go. It may be too dangerous for her."

The Eskimo apparently repeated Byron's speech to the girl. After listening intently, her face clouded, then, like a sudden burst of rain, her words came thick and fast.

The Eskimo heard her through, then with a smile on his lips said: "She say, that one, 'Eskimo woman always go where Eskimo man go. Eskimo man afraid? Afraid, too, that Eskimo woman. Eskimo man not afraid? Not afraid, that Eskimo woman.' She say that one girl, 'Wan'a go.' Better go, think mine."

This seemed satisfactory.

"All right, if that's the way it is, I think so, too," laughed Byron as he drew on his coat preparatory to departure.

It was agreed that when the appointed hour of the hunt should be approaching, Byron should hasten down the beach and inform these, his newfound friends, of the fact, and that they should hold themselves ready at any moment after the break-up of the ice to join in a hasty departure.

With these matters all arranged, he bowed

himself out of the den, and was soon on his way home.

* * * * * *

When Jerry found himself on the other side of the wide gap of water, safely out of reach of the old witch-doctor, he granted himself the boon of a good, hearty laugh.

Part of his merriment was caused by recollection of the way in which he had exposed the fake before his admiring followers, and part by the wild gymnastics and howling indulged in when he realized that the boy had escaped his clutches.

When at last the doctor gave up in despair and departed for his village, Jerry found himself confronted by a problem that was no laughing matter. How was he to recross that ominous stretch of black water?

He had leaped across it once, it was true. But that had been in the heat of flight, with fear gripping his heart. Could he now, in the cool calm of ordinary circumstance, repeat the feat?

It is a well-known fact that in time of great stress men are endowed with what appears to be superhuman strength. In time of disastrous fire,

a frail woman carries weights which she cannot afterwards lift. In time of flood, when someone is drowning, a man launches a boat which, in calmer times, he is unable to move. So it had been with Jerry. He had achieved the impossible. He had leaped that chasm but could not do it again. Once, twice, three times, he made a running start for the leap. Each time, at the brink, he halted. It was no use. That he would land in the water he could not for a moment question.

"Oh, well," he decided, "there must be some other way."

But what? The floe was drifting. These floes always are. It might be carrying him farther out to sea, for all he knew.

In his agitation he began making his way along the edge of the water. Imagine then his delight when, upon rounding a huge pile of ice, he discovered an Eskimo kiak drawn up on a broad ice-pan on his side of the water.

"Never rode in one, but I'll try anything once," he told himself as he lifted the paddle from the kiak and prepared to push it into the water.

Just there he was brought up with a start. This kiak might have been lost by some native. In that case he had a perfect right to take it. That it had been lost, however, seemed highly improbable. The truth more than likely was that some ambitious hunter was at this moment out there on the ice floes hunting polar bears in the moonlight. If that were true, and if Jerry took the kiak to the other edge of the water and left it there, the man would have no means of escaping from the floe; the floe might drift with him out to sea and his life be lost.

"In that case, I would be his murderer," Jerry told himself, "which I don't mean to be.

"Oh, well!" he sighed, "I suppose there's nothing to do but wait for him, then ask him to ferry me across."

He sat down very unwillingly to wait. But waiting was not his long suit. Soon he grew restless.

"I'll just look this craft through and see what he left behind," he told himself. "Here's a coil of walrus-hide rope. And here are some bits of driftwood. There's a tin basin or two and a little

can of tea. Driftwood, pans, tea; that means a little lunch when fresh meat has been captured. Wouldn't mind some myself. I'm hungry enough to eat it raw!"

"But say!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Rawhide rope, knife, driftwood for stakes. Wonder if it would work. Can't do worse than try."

Taking his long knife from his belt, he began hacking a hole in the ice some ten feet from the edge of the water. When this hole was as deep as his knife-blade would allow him to cut it, he made another some six inches from it. Into each of these he thrust a stout, round piece of driftwood. Then, with one of the pans, he brought water and poured it around the sticks.

He next held the stakes in such a position as left them slanting away from the black belt of water. When the water in the holes had frozen the stakes solidly to the ice, he rose, thrashed his arms about to warm them, then uncoiled the rawhide rope. One end of this he fastened to the kiak, the other he passed around the two stakes, then threw the coil in the kiak.

After chipping off the ice by the water in such

a manner as to make a slanting surface, he pushed the kiak into the water, eased himself gingerly into the uncertain seat, then paddled carefully away.

Arrived at the other shore, he disembarked, then gave his attention to the rawhide rope. It now lay in two strands across the water, still looped over the stakes. One end was fastened to the kiak; the other was in his hands.

"Now if the stakes hold, I'll make it," he told himself.

Shoving the kiak off, he began pulling at the loose end of the rope. The rope, sliding freely over the stakes, gave the kiak a pull and she went gliding gracefully toward the other side.

It took a little care to get her started safely up the slanting ice, but at last it was managed, and the boy had the pleasure of seeing the kiak glide to a safe position on the opposite shore.

"There," he breathed, "I may now go home with quite a clear conscience. I have crossed the stream and have wronged no man."

At that he took up a steady tramp which in less than an hour brought him once more to the door of his cabin.

CHAPTER XXIII

BEN ARNOLD'S STORY

The next day Jerry was sitting alone by the fire. Byron and the major had gone up to have a look at the location of the tin mine. He was in a mixed humor, was Jerry. One moment he was chuckling over the exploits of the night before, and the next he was bothering his head over the possibility that the old witch-doctor had recognized him and would at some uncertain hour wreak no uncertain vengeance upon him.

He was low in the depths of this latter type of meditation, when there came a loud thump at the door.

So realistic had been the pictures conjured up by his brain, that at the sound of someone knocking he leaped to his feet and sprang for the rifles in the corner.

"Rot!" he mumbled a second later. "It

couldn't be him. He wouldn't come right out bold like that. It's not the native way."

Nevertheless, as he shouted, "Come in," he remained in a position which left him within easy reach of the weapons.

It was not the witch-doctor, who, pushing back his parka hood as he came, stepped through the door and closed it behind him, though Jerry could have been scarcely less surprised had it been. It was Ben Arnold.

At sight of him, Jerry sprang forward to greet him, helped him off with his parka, then found him a place by the fire as he said cheerfully:

"Cup of coffee?"

"Don't mind. In the North its always acceptable," mumbled the miner.

He said not another word for some time. He sat rubbing his hands by the fire until the coffee was ready, then, when he had gulped down a full cup, steaming hot, and reached out a hand for another, he said suddenly, "Suppose you don't know who the man was that built this here cabin."

"Jaggers," said Jerry.

"You don't know who Jaggers was," contin-

ued the miner, as if determined to make at least one statement that might not be contradicted.

"No one knows much about him, I guess," smiled Jerry. "Rum old fellow, I guess; that's about all."

"No, that's not all," exulted the miner, rubbing his rough hands together until the sound was like the grating of a nutmeg. "That's not all; not near all. This Jaggers," his voice dropped to a whisper, "he was my dead partner's grandfather, that's what he was."

Lifting his head, he stared, with eyes half closed, at the boy, as if expecting an exclamation of surprise.

Jerry was surprised and showed it.

"Why — I — I thought nothing was known of his relatives?"

"That's what they all think," said Arnold, twisting his mouth into an expression intended to denote great knowledge and secrecy. "That's what they all think. But thinkin' don't never do nobody much good. It's knowin' that counts. And I know."

Seizing a poker, he jabbed the fire so viciously,

and with such good effect, that his dark face was lighted up as a smelter's by the forge.

"Jaggers was Lloyd Lovejoy's grandfather," he went on. "That's how Lovejoy came North—came to find the gold."

"The gold?"

"Exactly. Jaggers' pot of gold, 'er sack of gold, kettle, or whatever he kept it in."

"Did he find it?"

"He did not. Found his grave down at Nome. Tha't what he did."

Arnold was staring at the dust-blackened caribou skull in the peak of the wall. Jerry would have sworn that he saw something there that interested him greatly. His gaze shifted swiftly to the fire as Arnold asked suddenly, "Ever hear how Lovejoy died?"

"No."

"Want to?"

"I'd be interested, very much so."

"Well, Lovejoy and me was partners. That means we worked together and didn't scrap. You can leave it right there. Some partners I've seen up here are pals, take to one another like man

and wife — like some men and wives, I mean. Lovejoy and me wasn't like that. We was partners an' square with each other. That's all. Two men mine better together, one on top, one down below. Besides, it's safer. That is how we became partners. I knew he was square, and I knew I was, so we hitched.

"We'd been doin' assessment work on some claims up at the head of Tissue River when Lovejoy took the fever. I took care of him best I could, till I see it was a case for a doctor. Nearest doctor was a hundred miles away.

"'Twasn't much I did for him." He turned and spat thoughtfully at the fire. "I'd have done as much almost for a good dog. I don't take no credit. Tissue River, though, is a place that ain't like no other I've heard of. The devils of a cold hell lived up at the head of Tissue River, and they blow such blasts and blizzards down it as you never heard about, except in books, maybe.

"Well, I got him into a sleeping-bag and rolled him in our blankets. Then I tied him on our sled, and started out — hundred miles, trail not

marked at all and a blizzard blowin' down from that cold hell of Tissue River.

"Only had two dogs, so I had to take a hand with pullin' myself. Ever been in a blizzard — a regular Arctic one?

"Of course not," he said, answering his own question, "You're a chechauker.

"It's like this." He rose, and bending far forward, as if bracing himself against a storm, continued, "You fight it like you might a net that's been thrown against you to drag you down. You leap into it, you scrooch down and dodge under it; you stand up and battle it, as you would a human foe. Your dogs strike ice; you strike ice; your sled strikes ice. The wind picks you up and hurls you across it, and your dogs and sleds across it, as if they was so much dry grass. You land all in a heap. You pick yourself up. You find footing and fight some more.

"But then," he said suddenly, dropping into his chair, "what's the use? You couldn't understand. Nobody could that ain't been through that breath of cold hell on Tissue River."

He sat staring moodily at the fire for a time,

then said quietly: "I got to Nome with him and the sled and one dog; left one on the trail. Froze. Hated to. He'd been with me for three years, that dog. Had to do it. Got Lovejoy to the hospital safe. Not a frostbite. Couldn't save him, though; he died in two weeks. Fever had him.

"See them?" He held out two stumps of fingers on his right hand. "Done that on Tissue River, pullin' ag'in' that cold hell. Gettin' Lovejoy to the hospital. That's why I couldn't handle that crook better the other day. Thought you'd like to know."

He rose and reached for his parka. "Better be goin', I guess. Don't forget, though, that Jaggers was Lovejoy's grandfather, and that if he'd found the gold it would have all been his, for he told me once he was the only heir. But he didn't so I suppose that's all there is to that.

"One thing more, though," he spoke through his parka, as he dragged it on. "They'll tell you old Jaggers was a crook, ran away from the States and all that. Don't believe that. Him and his missus didn't hitch, that's all."

"If that's it," said Jerry, "perhaps he sent her all his gold."

"No, he didn't. I know that for a fact."

"Hum!" said Jerry, five minutes after the miner had gone, as he sat staring at the fire. "H-m, that's something else to think about. Quite a gob of something, if it's true. And why should he tell it, if it isn't?"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HUNT IS ON

It was with a strange feeling of uneasiness that Jerry left the cabin on the day appointed for the beginning of their great quest, the hunt to the death for Old Saber-Tusk. "It's as if I was leaving something back there in the cabin that should be guarded," he told himself as he glanced back to it, "some treasure being left to the next comer."

These thoughts soon left him when he arrived at the meeting-place at the edge of the broad collar of ice that still clung to the shore. It was a strangely mixed group that had gathered there. Teragloona and his three Eskimos waited in the thirty-five-foot skin-boat which they had patiently paddled round the Point. From the den among the sand dunes had come hurrying the young Eskimo and the girl. From over the dunes Charles Markham came swinging his high-power

rifle, and, last but not least, the boys and the major raced around the ice piles with a dog sled piled high with deerskins, food, harpoons and whatever else was necessary to a hunt that might last for days before they again touched land.

There was an air of suppressed excitement hovering over all as the supplies and equipment were put aboard. That it was a really serious undertaking they were about to launch upon, and one fraught with many dangers, not one of them at all doubted.

"I think I know how the old Norsemen used to feel when they set forth on an expedition in a boat no larger than ours," Byron whispered to Jerry as he tossed a bundle of skins into the prow of the boat and, giving the Eskimo girl a hand, assisted her to a seat on top of them. "It must have been thrilling but there must have been a feeling, too, that fate would perhaps not be kind enough to allow them all to return in safety."

"It's just like war and everything else," laughed Jerry. "You can't have the thrill without accepting the danger. As for me, give me them both."

"Desra?" shouted the old headsman, leaping to his place in the stern.

"Desra, desra, desra," came from his companions, which meant that all was in readiness and that they should push off.

As the stretch of black water between them and the icy shore-line widened, the dogs left behind put their noses in air and let forth a dismal howl. For these, however, the boys experienced no feeling of sympathy, for they knew that the wife of their head-man had been engaged to remain in the cabin and to see that they were properly fed and cared for.

The great floes of ice had been carried northward by wind and current. Save for the half mile of ice still clinging to the shore, and an occasional stray ice-pan here and there, the Straits were clear. The black, open water, as yet undisturbed by spring storms, was an ideal hunting ground. And since the old Eskimo hunter had assured them that the big bull walrus would undoubtedly be passing in a few hours and that Old Saber-Tusk was almost sure to be with that herd, excitement ran high from the very start. To the

inexperienced boys every dark point of a wavelet that broke the water was the black head of a walrus. So frequent and persistent were their declarations, "Right over there surely is one," that the head-man at last turned to them with a frown to snap out the word:

"Desra!"

This having been interpreted by the smiling major as meaning that he had had quite enough of their nonsense, quieted them for some time to come.

For a time they paddled and rowed, the white men wielding long, slim oars at the center and the Eskimos skillfully swinging short, broad paddles at prow and stern. When they had thus partly rounded the Cape, the oars and paddles were stored in the bottom of the boat and a mast and square sail brought into play. Since the wind was now fair and moderately brisk, they shot quite rapidly out into the current and were soon lost from sight of shore.

"Sailing the boundless deep in a skin-boat," murmured young Markham. "Ive had many a thrilling experience but never any such as this.

It gives me something of the thrill of the trenches in France," he smiled. "Truly it does."

They had gone some eight miles out into the open sea. The boys, having at last settled themselves down to a long and tedious wait for something of interest, were watching some little awks, the first of the season, as they made their clumsy way, half swimming, half flying, toward their summer home on the Diomede Islands, when their attention was suddenly drawn to the old headman, who, shading his eyes, was looking away to the north and saying something in tense and rapid tones to his Eskimo companions.

Soon the entire crew were shading their eyes and staring away at a spot in the ocean where three or four large, flat cakes of drift ice were basking in the sun.

"Action!" Jerry whispered tensely. "I do believe it's action. See how his muggs, our old chief, stares. See how his nose wiggles and his feet shuffle. For all the world like an old pointer we had once used to act when he had located a covey of partridges."

It did begin to look as if they were to be fa-

vored with plenty of excitement from the very start, for the boat was turned half about and everyone was ordered to his post that he might assist the lagging sail with paddle and oar.

"Don't see a thing," said Byron, twisting his head about in an attempt to get a good look at the fast approaching ice, "but then these old hunters have eyes such as no white man ever dreamed of."

Again they paddled on in silence. As they neared the spot, the excitement of the two boys visibly increased. So great was it in Jerry's case that he for a second forgot his task as oarsman and, tangling with the major, threw the entire crew off the swing.

"If that's the kind of sportsman you are," half grumbled the major, "we'll maroon you on the next island we come to, with plenty of bread and water and a rifle for securing the luxuries of life."

"Fine!" exclaimed Jerry. "I'd come back to civilization in five years with a story to tell that would make Robinson Crusoe look a piker."

Nevertheless, from that time he tended strictly

to business, never so much as glancing over his shoulder until he felt the almost unnoticeable jar that told him they had come alongside one of the ice-pans.

For a moment the heads of the two chiefs, Teragloona and the major, were bent together in solemn whispers. When at last the major straightened up it was to whisper to his white companions:

"He says there are three walrus asleep on the other edge of this ice-pan. He doesn't know exactly what kind they are, except that they are fairly large fellows. He thinks he had better go after them himself, and that the best way to get them is to cross the ice afoot, to harpoon them and hold them with the lances after they slip into the water, until they can be shot. He is willing to take two of us with him. Since Markham is a better shot than I am, it is a pleasure for me to give way to him. One of you boys can go with them. I suggest that you cast lots to see which it shall be, only don't be too much disappointed if you don't draw the lucky number, for there will beyond doubt be adventure enough yet

for the one who happens to remain behind."

He smiled as he said it, but had he known the true nature of the adventure which awaited them, his smile might have vanished.

"I have in my hand," he said, "two one dollar bills. I do not know what number they have on them. I will give you each one of them. The one drawing the largest number goes, the other stays here. Is that fair?"

"Fair enough," said the boys in unison.

"All right, here they are."

The hands of the boys trembled as they took the bills. Their breath came quick as they bent heads together over them. It was their first great hunt and this might be the supreme adventure. It was natural enough that each should want to be in on it.

For one moment a tense silence hung over the crew and the boat. Then Jerry, looking up with an odd smile on his face, announced, "Byron has it. His number is 57396443. Mine is but 23487757."

"A mere difference of some thirty millions," laughed Markham.

"Aw, say!" exclaimed Byron in a tense whisper, "that's altogether too bad. Let Jerry go. He's best with the harpoon."

But Jerry, being the true sport that he was, having played and lost fairly, would not hear of it. So, some five minutes later, three figures left the boat and, with weapons in hand, went skulking away across the ice-pan.

Had those left in the boat been less intent upon watching their friends' departure, they might have noticed a large skin-boat off to the right of them, which to all appearances was slipping as silently upon them as their friends were upon the walrus. But, under the circumstances, they did not notice, so the boat came on apace, the oars dipping silently into the water.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BEGINNING OF A STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS COMBAT

The six-foot-thick cake of ice on which the three hunters set forth to stalk their master game was a large one. Of a jagged and irregular shape, it might have been five hundred rods across it in one direction while it was but half the distance in another. The distance to be covered by the hunters took them from end to end of it and so brought them several hundred yards from their friends.

The surface of the ice was very irregular. Lying as it had at some ancient time close to some shore, it had been drifted over with great heaps of snow, which were in places fifteen or twenty feet in thickness. Besides this, it had at some other time been crowded against other cakes. Fragments from some of these had been piled upon the edge of it on the side occupied by the

walrus, in such a manner that there remained on that edge but one small stretch of free, flat ice.

This space was occupied by the walrus. They were therefore to be seen sunning themselves in what might have been called a miniature valley surrounded on all sides by mountain ranges of ice which were of no greater proportions in comparison than was the valley.

"A wonderful opportunity," whispered Charles Markham, as from behind a particularly large fragment of broken ice they had their first opportunity to observe their sleeping prey. "We have only to slip up behind one ice pile and an other until we are almost upon them, then make a dash for it. They are clumsy beasts; even if they awake we can harpoon them long before they reach the water. I doubt if even they awaken; think we can harpoon them as they sleep."

That Teragloona had some thoughts regarding the matter, and those rather startling thoughts, was shown plainly enough by the expression on his face. Had anyone cared to study him at that first glimpse of the prey, he might well have supposed that he was experiencing the greatest

difficulty in refraining from dashing right at the beasts without one thought of prowess or caution. The look on his face was similar to that worn by a movie actor who is supposed to have caught sight of the villain who has murdered his daughter or betrayed his best friend. The native's hands clenched and unclenched. He gnashed his teeth in such a manner as to draw forth a look of surprise from Markham. At the last, however, he conducted himself as any good hunter should and agreed readily enough that the white hunter's plan of attack was the proper one.

As for the walrus, they lay piled together like so many gigantic pigs, fast asleep and not waking any of the time long enough to lift a head and look about. So closely were they piled together that it was impossible for the inexperienced white hunters to tell whether there were three or five of them. The Eskimo had said there were three and they had taken it for granted that he knew.

Having made a careful survey of the ground, the native plucked nervously at Markham's arm, then beckoning him to follow on, gripped his

stout harpoon and the stouter rawhide rope, and led the way around the ice fragment, thence in a circular direction which brought them not a hundred feet from the sleeping beasts.

"Feel like St. George tackling the dragon," whispered Byron, shivering from head to foot with nervous excitement.

Markham looked at him and smiled. "I've heard it said that the bravest hunters were those whose teeth chattered before they ventured into the lion's den. So cheer up. You'll bear yourself bravely enough at the end, I am sure."

Byron did not hear these last words. He had climbed a low pile of ice which left him still hid from the walrus by a higher pile, but brought him in full view of their boat over on the other edge of the ice. The thing he saw happening there filled him with wonder.

His companions to a man were apparently looking and listening intently for any sight or sound of the coming affair with the walrus, while behind them was a second boat, not three lengths from them. Standing in the prow of this boat, with a long paddle upraised like a lance, was a

tall dark native. At that distance it was impossible for the boy to be sure, but it seemed to him that it must be the intention of this man, as soon as the boats were close enough together, to strike his young Eskimo of the den over the head with the paddle. What would happen after this, he could not guess, nor was there time for him to watch the outcome for at that instant the eager Teragloona made an impatient gesture and, gripping his harpoon tighter than ever, motioned them to join him in the final dash and the attack.

As they came out into the open where the sleeping beasts were within full view, Byron could see at once that there were indeed but three of them. The next instant his blood seemed to turn to water as his eyes told that while two of these were unusually large bull walrus, black and rugged of skin, the third one, which lay sprawled somewhat apart, was more than twice as large as either of his companions and had a skin which resembled nothing so much as the black and rocky side of a mountain.

"Saber-Tusk!" Byron breathed, with a gasp of excitement.

"As I live! Here's rare luck," his companion answered back.

As for Teragloona, he cast back a dark scowl at them, then with the softness and agility of a cat, sprang full at the massive sleeping giant of the Arctic, Old Saber-Tusk.

* * * * * *

It would not be fair to keep you longer in suspense in regard to what was happening over at the boat. Things of some moment were coming off there.

The man who rode in the prow of the strange boat was none other than old Ne-pos-ok, the witch-doctor, whose well-laid plans Jerry had so cleverly upset with his fire extinguisher. If he recognized the boy at the moment when he and his ten companions were stealing upon those left in the skin-boat, he gave no sign of it. He seemed intent upon bringing the career of the young native of the den to a swift and speedy end, and would have succeeded too had not Jerry, at the precise moment when he came within easy reach of his intended victim, for some unaccountable reason glanced about and shouted:

"Pirates!" then swung his own oar about with the speed of the wind to thrust it square into the stomach of the astonished doctor, who at once tumbled backward into his own boat, thereby barely escaping an icy plunge into the sea.

That this was not to be the end of it became evident at once, for, in the other boat, ten oars and paddles flew into the air, as so many lances might in olden days, and it was up to the major's men to fight or make a dash from their boat to the ice. To do this, to surrender their boat to these mysterious ruffians, was farthest from their thoughts. So, accepting the challenge, they gripped each an oar or a paddle and a fight began, the like of which has seldom been witnessed on sea or land.

CHAPTER XXVI

HE DRIVES THE HARPOON HOME

With one master-stroke that carried with it all the force of a trained arm and the spirit of a fiercely savage heart, Teragloona drove the point of his shaft into that mountain of flesh and bone and stubborn hide which was Old Saber-Tusk. Then, as with one wild roar the monster tumbled into the sea, he set his lance solidly into the ice, wrapped the skin rope many times about it, and called at last for the assistance of his comrades in resisting the first rude shock which must come when the monster reached the end of his tether.

"Will it hold? Will it?" breathed Byron as he set every muscle tense to tug at the lance.

That was the question uppermost in each man's mind. There was not long to wait. Came such a wrench as threatened to tear the lance from its moorings, to bend or break its steel point or to snap the rawhide rope. For one wild moment

with bated breaths the three held their ground. Then, when the force appeared to slacken, the Eskimo, smiling a savage smile, nodded to Markham and his rifle.

"Come up soon," he grunted. "You ready."

The thought that Markham was to have the first, perhaps the killing shot, at the monarch of the ocean, sent a pang of envy through Byron's being. It lasted but a moment and need not have come at all, for this beast who had defied the wariest of hunters for half a generation was not to be killed by a single shot from the white man's rifle.

The time came when he tore up the waters with one wild rush for air. At that same instant the rifle cracked, not once but twice. Whether either shot registered a hit would be hard to tell. That they had no effect whatever upon the strength and rage of the beast was testified to by the redoubled strain put upon the lance and rope as once more he strained savagely upon the bonds that held him prisoner.

Three times he rose. Three times the high-power rifle barked its challenge. There was blood

upon the water, but that was all. With strength not at all lessened, with temper twice strengthened, the beast sawed savagely at his bonds.

Then there came a time when he rose and no rifle shot greeted him. Throwing back his lever in amazement, the young hunter looked chagrined. By some oversight, he had put but five cartridges in his rifle. He had no others in his pockets and the balance of his ammunition was in the boat. Hastily leaping upon an upended ice cake, he looked away toward the boat, as if to shout to some one to bring him the needed cartridges. The next moment found him staring in amazement. The boat was gone.

"Gone as if the ocean had swallowed her up," he muttered as he leaped back to the level ice.

There was still hope. Both Byron and Teragloona had rifles. While these were of less power than was Markham's, there was a chance that they might do in the beast which seemed possessed of more than earthly life and power.

Motioning Markham to take his place at the lance, the Eskimo seized his own rifle and, walking steadily to the very edge of the water, stood

there silent as a statue. Only the working of his lips told that he was under great emotional strain.

Again Byron braced himself for the strain upon the rawhide rope. To his great astonishment, this time it did not come. Seconds passed but no terrific tug told them that the beast had again made a try at escape.

"What can have happened?" breathed Byron. "Is he dead?"

"May be. May be loose and gone," came in a hoarse whisper from Markham.

The very thought of such a catastrophe caused Byron's brain to reel. He fancied, as he watched the aged native, that if this terrible thing were to happen Teragloona would pitch himself madly into the sea.

The answer to this question, however, was not far to seek, for there came a boiling of water, mixed with blood, close to the edge of the ice. The next instant the black form of the walrus shot out of the water. Not five feet from the Eskimo hunter, he uttered a savage! "Ark Ark!" as he lunged forward.

For one tense second Byron thought the Eskimo was lost. So close did the walrus come to dragging him into the water that he left a mark on the hard sole of his muckluck and tore a fragment of ice from beneath his very feet as he sank back into the water.

As for Teragloona, he was like iron. Not budging an inch from where he stood, he cooly leveled his rifle and fired, threw in a new cartridge and fired again. Then, since his rifle was a repeater, in his rage at seeing the beast once more making a race for life, he lost all control and emptied his magazine into the beast as rapidly as he could pull the trigger. Then, throwing the smoking rifle from him, he gripped the handle of his knife and seemed about to throw himself into the foaming water to kill or be killed by the beast that had drowned his only son.

Reading this wild intention in his eyes and knowing he could not swim, Byron left his post, seized him by the arm and fairly hurled him toward the lance. Then seizing his own rifle he stood ready to make his shots, the last they possessed, do their very most at winning the battle

they had fought so bravely, yet with so little success.

"Now!" he breathed, as he saw a foaming in the waters and knew that the enraged beast was returning for a second attack.

Suddenly remembering a little trick he had practiced when he felt himself growing excited after hooking a fine salmon in the Columbia River, he began to whistle. The soothing influence of this carefree habit was amazing. He found his muscles growing steady and his mind seemed to clear at the same time.

"Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes." He got that sentence from history, but it stood him in good stead now. He did not fire at once, but waiting until the beast had made his lunge and had scraped the ice with his massive tusks, he at last saw the red gleam of an eye and, at that instant, fired straight at the eye.

* * * * * *

It was a strange and weird battle that was going on at the other side of the ice-pan. The instant after Jerry had surprised the crafty witch-

doctor and had poked him in the stomach with his oar, oars and paddles flashed and flew in every direction.

Outnumbered two to one, the major and his little party fought valiantly. Now a side stroke sent the young Eskimo reeling to the bottom of the boat. But the Eskimo girl, quite as brave as any, seized his paddle and dealt the offender such a blow as shook the weapon from his hand and sent it flying into the black waters. Now Jerry warded off a blow; then using his oar as a lance, jabbed so fiercely at his assailant as he rose for a better thrust that he was pitched head-foremost into the sea and saved himself from drowning only by clinging to the side of the boat until his cries attracted the attention of a comrade and he was hauled dripping in.

There were rifles in each boat. Jerry shivered at the thought. Should a rifle be touched, the affair might end in great carnage. But the attacking party, no doubt knowing well enough the terrific cost of murdering a white man, and apparently being intent upon but one thing, the removing of that young Eskimo of the den from

the boat, held to their paddles and oars as weapons.

With these they might have won too, for as the battle raged, the little company of fighters, thrust on this side and thwacked on that, grew dizzy and weary. Their strokes grew less and less effective. It was an unfair attack; two to one was too great odds. Jerry in his inmost soul resented it. He struggled, even as he fought, for some means of defeating them without resorting to more terrible violence, which meant rifles and death for some.

Glancing up, he suddenly became conscious of the fact that a heavy fog had suddenly descended upon them and that they had been carried in the fight so far from the ice that it was no longer visible.

"Byron, Markham, Teragloona!" he exclaimed all in a breath. "They are on that cake of ice, without food or blankets. If we drift much farther from them we will be out of haling distance and they will be lost, lost forever, to starve and freeze on a drifting cake of ice. Something must be done at once."

Just then the something that might now be done burst upon his consciousness.

"The knife!" he breathed. "The gambler's knife! It is still at my belt."

At that he dropped his oar and flung himself in the bottom of the boat, for all the world as if he had been dealt a blow that had knocked the last flash of consciousness out of him.

He did not remain quiet there for an instant, but having dragged the knife from his belt, crept stealthily up the side of the boat until his head was just over the rail. Twice he was seen and barely dodged a terrific blow from a short paddle. The major silenced this combatant with a swift thrust to the side. Again Jerry came up. This time he flashed the knife across the narrow space which lay between the boats and slashed the skin covering their opponent's boat a full eighteen inches, up and down. Half the slash being beneath the water, floods began at once to pour into the enemies' boat.

Leaping to his feet Jerry shouted, "Push away. All hands push away!"

Then thrusting his own oar firmly against the

side of the other boat, he give her such a shove as swung her half about. Other oars flashed and in less than ten seconds they saw the fog close about the foundering boat.

Wild cries of panic struck their ears.

"I hope she don't sink," said Jerry wrinkling his brow.

"Never worry," smiled the major. "Such an accident often occurs when they are hunting walrus. They are prepared for it. A sealskin spread over the hole from the outside will stop the flow until they can patch it. That was a clever trick. We are safe enough now. They'll never find us in this fog."

"If only we had had a single chance," groaned Jerry, whose Irish love of a fight was all but irresistible, "I would never have done it. We'd have beaten them to a frazzle."

"But what in the world did they want?" asked the still amazed major.

"Ask him," whispered Jerry, "but don't speak above a whisper, and tell the other natives to paddle silently away. We don't want them catching up with us after their boat is fixed."

"Indeed we don't," the major whispered back. "We've all had quite enough."

Jerry had pointed to the young Eskimo from the den who at this moment sat nursing a bruise on his cheek bone. Having made his way to his side, the major whispered: "What did they want?"

"Want me," grinned the Eskimo. "Ne-pos-ok, one witch-doctor, wan'a keel me."

"Why?"

"Ne-pos-ok crook, bad man. One time all Eskimo come together. Many Eskimo wan'a make speech; talk much. Wan'a speak mine. Speak mine, 'Ne-pos-ok bad man, crooked man, cheat man.' Say mine, 'Ne-pos-ok cheat Eskimo, keel babies, no good Ne-pos-ok.'"

"What did Ne-pos-ok say then?"

"Say wan'a keel me. Run away, mine. Follow me, that one witch doctor. To-day wan'a keel."

"Good for you!" exclaimed Jerry who had heard the conversation. "Just for that, if we had half a chance, we'd go back and beat them up some more.

"But no," he cried in consternation upon sudden thought, "Our first duty is to our comrades marooned on that ice-pan. Somehow we must find them."

CHAPTER XXVII

A BULL'S-EYE

And what of those three friends on the ice-pan? How had the battle gone with them? Well enough, I assure you. The skull of a bull walrus is as impregnable as a cobble stone but for two small spots. These spots are located back of his eye-balls. A shot taking effect there goes directly to his brain and kills instantly. Old Saber-Tusk was no different from any other walrus in this regard. Byron's cool head had enabled him to make a bull's-eye on that glaring red eye of the walrus. He had fired but this one shot when, to his utter amazement, he heard the great beast utter a death roar and saw him turn upside down in the water.

"Dead!" he muttered, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"Dead!" echoed Markham.

"Muckie!" (Dead) repeated the Eskimo, who

at once dropped upon his knees in a prayer of thanksgiving.

Our story is now soon concluded. Some few matters of interest, however, still remain. The major and his party had no trouble at all in locating their friends on the ice-pan. As abruptly as it had come, the fog lifted and showed them the ice-pan, with the triumphant hunters upon it, in full view.

Old Saber-Tusk proved to be a huge walrus, the like of which has never been seen on those shores, either before or since. As for his saber-like tusk, it proved to be a tusk that had been splintered endwise, probably at very early age, and which had in some manner been sharpened almost to a keen knife's edge. Since the walrus was very old, his tusks were exceedingly hard and it is not to be doubted that he had done deadly execution at times with this tusk. That he was a man-eater is to be doubted.

The major insisted that, since he had been the real slayer, Byron should become the possessor of that matchless skull and pair of tusks. This honor Byron refused to accept, saying that his

polar bear skin was trophy enough. So in the end the walrus treasures went to the major, and they decorate his fireplace to this day.

On the return journey to the cabin, Markham turned suddenly and said, "You might be interested to know that my task of examining the tin mine is at an end and that it has proved of little consequence."

"Is that possible?" said the major with a sinking heart.

"We will offer five thousand dollars for it," said Markham. "At that it is little more than a wild speculation."

"So," said the major thoughtfully, "Ben Arnold is an honest man."

"Honest as the day is long, but unfortunate in his ventures."

That left the major in rather a sober mood. It was true that they had succeeded in their hunt for the master game. But his great mission after all had been to secure a fortune for his well-loved friend, the widow and her children. Once they were at the cabin, however, a letter which had been left him by the first steamer of the season,

appeared to cheer him up tremendously. Indeed, around the festive board which was set in the honor of the slaying of Old Saber-Tusk, he was the jolliest of the jolly.

They were all seated about a roaring fire after the feast, when Jerry suddenly started up and exclaimed: "The major has his walrus head and Byron his polar bear skin to take home. As for me, I will not be outdone, I shall take home the caribou antlers that have watched this cabin for half a century."

"That's right!" exclaimed Markham. "Climb up on my shoulders and take them down."

No sooner said than done. Jerry was soon pulling away at the rawhide rope by which the head hung suspended.

"Gee whillikens!" he exclaimed. "How heavy it is. Why, I'm —"

His sentence was not finished, for at that instant the thing escaped from his grasp and went crashing to the floor. The crash of it was so great that the very rafters rattled. To their immense astonishment, there came the merry jingle of metal and the next instant the whole floor was

alive with yellow disks which rolled in every direction as if seeking a way of escape.

"Gold!" exclaimed Jerry, tumbling from the back of his friend. "Old Jaggers' gold! We have discovered its hiding-place. His bank was the caribou's skull!"

And so they had. Besides the gold there was a roll of bank notes of considerable value. When they had run down the last fleet coin and had stacked them all in neat piles beside the bank notes they footed it all up and found it to be something less than ten thousand dollars.

"So," said Jerry, smiling happily, "your widow has a legacy after all. The only difference is it comes not from her former husband but from his grandfather, Old Jaggers."

"Quite right," agreed the major. "First of all, however, the expenses of this expedition must come out of this pile of gold. That is no more than right."

This suggestion was met with stormy protest from the two boys but the major silenced their objections by showing them the letter which had put him in such a jolly humor. It was a letter

assuring him that the fair widow had at last decided to accept his hand as suitor in her second matrimonial venture.

"That means," he smiled, "that in the future, what's hers is mine and what's mine is hers. Therefore I insist on paying the expenses of this expedition. I realize that you boys have ample funds to pay your own share, but my wish is that you keep that in store for some future adventure. My theory is that young fellows need money for two things and for nothing more: for education and for an occasional adventure."

With these words the matter was closed. After a toast to the major's future happiness as a man of family had been drunk in pantomime the party broke up.

A few days later the major and his boy pals took boat for Seattle and ten days later the boys were privileged to relate their adventures to their parents, who were glad enough to have them safe home again.